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Essays for Ministry Professionals

Edited by
John H. Morgan

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Foundation Theology 2017: Essays for Ministry Professionals

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Where in a free society might one expect to find a safe and public place where ideas can be discussed and various opinions explored except on a university campus? Not in politics! One is reminded of the congressman who began his address on the floor of the House with this remark: "I know I am lying but hear me out!" Not in a house of worship! One is reminded of the preacher who said to one questioning his sermon: "If you ain't got it like I've got it, then you ain't got it!" Neither religion nor politics seem to be prepared to either encourage or permit a "free and open discussion" of topics not reflective of their own bias and prejudice. It must be to the university, to the academy of scholars and students, to whom this awesome and indispensable responsibility must reside. And, a free and open discussion does not mean only those ideas of which I approve or we as a group approve or as society itself approves but rather ideas of which we desperately disapprove. For, unless we are willing for everything to be discussed, for all ideas to be heard and explored, wherein the rule of reason might be applied, then there is little justification for any idea to be considered by reasonable people.

Furthermore, the very nature of a free and open discussion requires that those opposed to any idea must be able to so articulate the opposition's position as to secure the opposition's approval of their position as stated by the opposition itself. Unless I can state my opponent's position in such a fashion as to secure his/her acknowledgement that I have stated their position

correctly, then there is no real opportunity for a free and open discussion of conflicting ideas. Where there is the failure on both parties' part to state their opponent's position to their opponent's satisfaction, it is impossible to engage in a serious dialogue but rather only in a meaningless juxtaposition of dual monologues. When you can state my position to my own satisfaction and I can state your position to your own satisfaction, then and only then can we have a free and open discussion.

The Graduate Theological Foundation has for over 50 years prided itself on just this approach to the search for truth and understanding. To actually hear and listen to those with whom one disagrees such that what is heard is actually what has been said is the key to mutual respect. This collection of essays bespeaks a wide range of differing opinions and insights into the nature of what it means to be human. It is hoped that they are received in the spirit in which they are presented.

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CHAPTER ONE

Treating Sexual Addiction:

*The Classical Schools of Psychotherapy
of Freud, Frankl and Maslow*

David C. Bellusci, OP

Introduction

In this paper I shall examine three classical schools of therapy drawing from the original texts of Sigmund Freud, Victor Frankl and Abraham Maslow, and John Morgan's work, *Beginning with Freud* (Morgan, 2005). This paper focuses on psychotherapeutic models to treat individuals with sexual addiction.

Sigmund Freud

Freud's background and his later psychotherapy suggests that we bring into psychotherapy something of our own history, our childhood experiences. Our own unresolved issues may become an obstacle in our effort to offer others guidance and support in the form of therapy. The therapist might empathise with the person so that the client's narrative becomes the thera-

pist's. We guide them, we journey with them, and hope with the suitable tools the client makes the best choice she or he can.

Freud places sex in his etiology of all neuroses, but in cases of sexual addiction, what is the relationship between addiction and neurosis? Freudian etiology suggests a tension between the reality principle (pleasure), and the avoidance principles (pain), leading to neurosis if not psychosis (Freud, 1962, pp. 14, 31). The etiological foundation to neurotic behaviour leads to Freud's statement, "the purpose of life is the programme of the pleasure principle"; but, "the very problem is found in the answer due to the counter-opposing principle of pleasure and principle of reality" (*ibid.*, p. 12).

We can see the opposition between the principle of pleasure and the principle of reality: reality may forbid — due to moral/social norms — many kinds of pleasure-seeking activities. Can we speak of a stage where awareness of this conflict is present? For Freud tension begins with the id-driven child. The principle of pleasure that must be brought under control would appear to emerge with the ego and super-ego. The child is expected to restrain these desires; pleasure becomes the core of the neurosis due to varying layers of imposing social constraints. What makes sexual addiction neurotic is both obsession and constraint by the imposing social demands on the superego.

When a person cannot live according to the principle of reality, she or he withdraws into some kind of delusional state, or constructs a make-believe-world to accommodate these unfulfilled desires (*ibid.*, pp. 22-23). However, is it possible for a person to escape reality through a reconstructed world to the extent of being unaware of this self-deception? The conflict would appear between reality and illusion. It might seem as if sexual addicts live according to the pleasure principle and are far from a delusional world. Pursuing the pleasure principle is not equivalent to the uncontrollable pursuit of sexual pleasure

which functions as an escape from the reality of pain – hence, the collapse into delusion-believing sexual activity has no limit (Bellusci, 2011, pp. 107ff.).

Tension emerges due to the libidinal powers between the id and superego with the ego that mediates between the two. The difficulty is the role of the ego. How can the ego determine whether the superego's demands are reasonable or not, in order for the individual to make socially approved choices or changes? A pacified id? A sublimated one? We can expect differences between the superego from one person to the next, but how does the ego screen we might say, what is possible, acceptable or necessary for the id in the case of a sexually traumatised child or in the case of a weakened superego with the psycho-affective fragility of an adult?

The feelings of a limitless bond with the universe or an “ocean feeling” is understood by Freud as a source of energy because it expresses this powerful need, interpreted as the helpless infant's longing for the powerful father (Gay, 2006, p. 544). The religious interpretation given to this feeling can simply be understood as the reality of the finite being confronted with all its limits at any stage in life, in the presence of the Infinite, the paradox experience of being overwhelmed and feeling vulnerable. The feeling suggested by Freud is more one of the fear being swallowed by this current that in itself is the experience of delirium.

While I agree that the religious feeling can be a source of energy, this energy creates a desire for communion with the Transcendent, rather than a need based on powerlessness. The tension expressed by Freud reflects Plato's influence on Freudian thought, a tension between the spiritual and material world, the material world identified with the flesh, while communion with the Transcendent is the experience of goodness, virtue and oneness (Plato, 2001, 206b-207d). This desire to be in communion

with the Transcendent in the presence of mystery is fundamental to being human which is why Mircea Eliade can talk about the human being as *homo religiosus* (Eliade, 1959, p. 15).

Freud is correct about the human desire for happiness: this affirmation can be traced to Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. who maintained that all individuals strive for happiness, and happiness is the purpose of our existence (Aristotle, 2001, 9.9). Our actions are chosen on the basis of what makes us happy.

The four areas in which Freud makes a significant contribution to counselling is clarifying three levels of consciousness: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious, as well as psychosexual development and personality structure in psychoanalytic therapy. The importance of recognising what emerges on the surface may be triggered by what is underlying — and the archaeology of the unconscious that needs to be dealt with.

What can be identified as the underlying sexual factors or triggers that lead to compulsive sexual activity associated with addiction? If the id is that which is situated at the unconscious level, and the ego represents the preconscious or unconscious, the superego may seem to no longer respond to the ego in the case of sexual addiction probably because the ego itself has been traumatised. Are sexual addicts individuals whose superego lack optimal functionality? In the absence of a functional superego, a weakened ego, the id finally would dominate. The id dominates as a pleasure-principle, but paradoxically, as an escape from reality of pain; the pleasure principle for sexual addicts serves as a defense-mechanism to repress pain rather than express sexual impulses, thereby, subverting the object of the pleasure principle. A psychologically-driven therapy serves to identify layers of underlying material that helps release buried information affecting human behaviour (Freud, 1962, p. 12; Gay, 2006, p. 171). Due to pain and suffering in the archaeology of unconscious, by gradually exposing this protected or repressed material, the indi-

vidual who suffers could commence a journey towards spiritual growth.

I believe repressed material needs to be explored for spiritual growth — the problem is not only one of mental health. The therapy provides the occasion to understand how God is working in the life of the individual. Sensitive areas need to be approached with care respecting the individual's feelings about how much can be discussed, and even when the questions ought to be asked. With a relationship of trust, the individual should be able to release the protected/hidden material, then, the actual therapy begins.

Victor Frankl

Victor Frankl's studies were in medicine, neurology and psychiatry, while he focussed on depression and suicide for his psychiatric research. Heading the *Selbstmorderpavillon* Frankl had immediate exposure to women prone to suicide (Klingberg, 2001, p. 73). The intense experience at the pavilion allowed Frankl to develop his theoretical analyses of depression and suicide. This knowledge was further put to use at *Theresienstadt* where Frankl was asked by the camp directors to establish a special unit intended to assist new arrivals at the camp who were in a state of shock or grieving which led to the suicide unit Frankl set up (*ibid.*, pp. 116-17).

How does the research in psychotherapy and/or neurobiology help us understand addictive behaviour? I must first of all listen to the individuals, and their journey that led them to the pain where they are. Sexual abuse, sexual experimentation, and inadvertent sexual exposure at early stages, even unmet psycho-affective needs, have different sexual implications which lead to varying sexual attitudes. Certainly, the moral climate of the home, the relationship with the mother and father, with sib-

lings, with friends, each is significant in sexual development. Relationships at all levels can be rewarding as much as damaging. Perhaps because the individuals I work with have strong religious convictions they are able to see their addiction not as a dead end, but as something that can hopefully be resolved, through their faith in God and prayer.

This means I listen to the suffering from the client's past, his or her present conditions, and what they perceive as obstacles that keep them from fulfilling their hopes and spiritual desires. Different scenarios emerge with sexual addiction but what remains fundamental is that each individual needs to be listened to.

Logotherapy is the result of Frankl's research and treatment of depression and suicide as he formulated in his, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, and *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 2006). In these works, Frankl's psychotherapeutic methodology is expressed, as he states, "If a prisoner felt that he could no longer endure the realities of camp life, he found a way out in his mental life — an invaluable opportunity to dwell in the spiritual domain, the one that the SS were unable to destroy. Spiritual life strengthened the prisoner, helped him adapt, and thereby improved his chances of survival" (Morgan, 2005, p. 100). The significance of the concentration camp experience where prisoners lost the sense of life's purpose, what remains is the "spiritual life" that gives a sense of meaning and survival. This is precisely what we experience in today's society, depression, sexual addiction, the distorted meaning of life, the purposelessness of human existence. Logotherapy re-directs the individual to the spiritual dimension of human existence that offers meaning.

Most important in Logotherapy is that individuals are led to the, "will to meaning." In a significant passage Frankl maintains that, "We need to stop asking about the meaning of life, and

instead, to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life... Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual ...It does not really matter what we expect from life; rather, what matters is what life expects from us” (Frankl, 2006, pp. 110-12). For sexual addicts this means they are not helpless or powerless victims acted upon, but they can assume responsibility for their acts, first by recognising there is a problem, second by seeking help, and finally, by making the necessary changes that would give life deeper and fuller meaning. Frankl maintains that the trauma caused by illness and disease is not a reason why someone is suffering, as in the case of an inoperable tumor, but rather, the condition itself incapacitates the person and the person is kept from functioning as they once had.

From a theological perspective, while suffering and pain are a natural part of human experience, neither of these is to be sought in themselves. When we do experience suffering or pain the question is, “How do I handle this?” In Catholicism suffering is not seen either as punishment from God, or as God vindicating himself, but rather, allowing the person to participate in the suffering of Christ. As part of Catholic spirituality suffering is salvific and can even be chosen, what is referred to as “sacrifice,” is a way to participate in the passion of Christ. What is the purpose of such participation? Suffering is considered as a means to purify oneself, a cleansing process, and in this sense, suffering is redemptive.

Someone who is addicted to pornography might recognise that she or he must refrain from engaging in sexual acts; abstinence expected of sexual addicts is referred to as “sobriety” by counsellors. Sobriety or abstinence requires great sacrifice, pain felt, the anguish of whether to move ahead towards sexu-

ally pleasurable experiences that have become uncontrollable, or to say “no” — even if this “no” seems impossible. Suffering is the only word that can help understand what the abstaining addict is going through. And then the questions surface, “What for?” “Why bother?” “Why should I?” What does sexual abstinence do for the person besides making him or her suffer? A sense that suffering has value, that pain serves as purifying as well as strengthening the individual, and this includes the painful choice of refraining from sexual acts.

In the case of Logotherapy, Frankl underscores its educative dimension where the individual moves beyond personal meaning, but to consider other meanings which she or he carries to the personal situation/s of life so that, “Logotherapy is ultimately education towards responsibility.” Frankl further maintains, “the patient must push forward independently toward the concrete meaning of his own existence” (*ibid.*, p. 101).

Fundamental to the guiding principles that help answer the questions of life are “conscience” and “regret” (Morgan, 2005, p. 107). Our conscience is not only before us in moral dilemmas that have serious implications, but the day to day decisions that are being made, even what seems to be most insignificant. Along with this is regret, we know we did not follow our conscience, or perhaps did follow our conscience without being able to predict the outcome. But regret helps prevent us from repeating the same thing, making us more prudent in future decision, weighing the implications of our actions so as to avoid regret. Regret seems to surface when people come to realise at a certain moment in their life, they were on the wrong path, as if at a crossroads, they had a choice to make and made a bad choice. The regret of the bad choice is reflected in how they live their lives in terms of unhappiness, a moral condition leading to a miserable existence.

No doubt sexual addicts at some stage regret their behaviour, but it is not so much regret that leads them to counselling but feeling that their actions are out of control. Though the addict may regret their compulsive sexual activity, the regret risks to reinforce the same activity, attempting to escape unresolved conflicts through sexual acts, regretting these acts, and uncontrollably returning to the sexual outlet as a solution to pain and regret. This loss of control places them in a position, by the time they seek help, to re-examine their life, and their out-of-control actions. But what do they regret? The choices they make? If their actions are uncontrollable, the client with the therapist needs to identify the source of the compulsive sexual acts. The sexual addict seeks change. Perhaps nobody even knows what is going on in his or her life, and nobody seems to be affected, but the addict realises something is seriously wrong. Their conscience tells them “this cannot go on.” Everything that follows is associated with abstinence and entails suffering.

One of the ways in which Frankl believes we can come to know life’s meaning is by suffering (Frankl, 2006, p. 108). In Suffering we find the dimension of life that conveys the fragility of the human condition, but in this weakened state, where the person feels vulnerable, a victim, there is still a sense of purpose that manifests itself where suffering can be given meaning.

In terms of “freedom” two aspects of Frankl’s thought are significant: first, that both the individual’s heritage and genetics are accepted not in the deterministic sense, but rather, that heritage and genetics provide a reservoir of energy from which the person can draw for his or her own good, and for the good of humanity; the second is that of “nature,” and in this instance Frankl distances himself from the view that the environment, whether social or physical, determines a person’s development. Frankl further identifies three elements to freedom: instincts, heritage and environment which offer the individual the possibil-

ity to exercise and fulfil his or her freedom. This is achieved by recognising, accepting and directing the individual's freedom, so that the person uses freedom to attain purpose and meaning in life as opposed to feeling like a powerless victim of social forces.

In the case of sexual addicts where suffering is associated with past trauma or stems from psycho-affective disturbances, the issues need to be confronted in some manner, so the client's life can take a direction that is not determined by past suffering, but where this suffering can be a form of strength. Choices that purify – to confront one's pain — enable the sexual addict to overcome suffering, and in the choice of this purification, the sexual addict encounters freedom.

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow's personality theory expressed in his book, *Towards a Psychology of Being* maintains that, "If we wish to help humans to become more fully human...we must realize not only that they try to realize themselves, but that they are also reluctant or afraid or unable to do so" (Maslow, 2011; Morgan, 2005, p. 119). *Towards a Psychology of Being* offers a positive psychology of the individual where the focus is on intrinsic values. Maslow affirms that, "This inner nature, as much as we know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically evil, but rather either neutral or positively good" (Morgan, 2005, p. 120). This optimistic vision of the person allows room for growth and accentuates the possibility of making good choices as part of that growth.

I have found that individuals who have been traumatised, marked by childhood abuse in its different forms, even within the context of "friendships," may feel there is no way out from the past. However, a psychotherapeutic approach that

emphasises the goodness of the person, and the powerlessness of childhood experiences, enables the client to feel there is hope, that what may be interpreted as an evil cycle, from sexual trauma, guilt, sexual escape, to guilt, can be resolved by re-examining what is triggering the cycle, focusing on the goodness of the individual as opposed to feelings of evil. This was the difficulty with classical psychoanalysis for Maslow, and its contemporary behaviourism, which he saw as being entrenched in a negativity of human nature as well as its diminished potential (Maslow, 2011, pp. 13-14).

Instead, Maslow showed optimism about individuals and the human desire to realise their potential leading to a humanistic psychology, namely, the “hierarchy of human needs” and “self-actualization.” The basic assumptions of Maslow’s hierarchy is that: 1.) humans have a biological inner nature; 2.) the inner nature is unique to the individual and in part species-linked; 3.) human inner nature can be the object of scientific enquiry; 4.) human nature is intrinsically good or neutral, but it is not evil; 5.) humans should nurture this inner nature, and find ways of expressing it; 6.) when the very being of our nature is suppressed, the person falls ill; 7.) unlike human instincts, this inner nature is frail and needs to be looked after; 8.) when this nature is suppressed, it can handle at its centre the human personality; and finally, 9.) nurturing, fostering, and supporting these deep impulses contribute to mental health (Hoffman, 1988, p. 205).

We have “general types of needs” such as physiological, survival, safety, love, and esteem, which must be satisfied before an individual can act unselfishly. These Maslow called “deficiency needs,” and these needs serve as drives leading the individual toward growth, which for Maslow is “self-actualisation.” Of the most basic or instinctual needs are air, water, food, and sex (Maslow, 2011, pp. 14-32).

While I would agree that air, water and food are basic needs where people need to breathe, eat and drink, sex is a basic need that can be brought under control if the person chooses to do so. Not only Christianity but other spiritual and religious traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism have shown that a person, for ascetic purposes of purification, detachment, peace, joy, harmony, can control their sexual impulses. The Christian tradition has always valued celibacy, whether hermits, monks, or nuns, taking the example of the chaste Christ. This raises a question whether sexual needs are to be exercised and fulfilled, or simply brought under control, in order to move up Maslow's hierarchy. Sexual impulses would at least have to be dealt with by acknowledging them and then acquiring the virtues to control them, so as to live a psycho-affective healthy life. Acquiring the virtues to control sexual impulses is necessary in sexual addiction. This is not a matter of sexual preference or sexual options, but the case of desperate individuals who feel powerless faced with behaviour that has caused them pain and grief unable to perform their daily functions: from recognising the need to make changes to actually making change.

Maslow further maintains that safety needs such as security and stability as well as those of a more psychological nature, social needs, belonging, love and acceptance, are part of this hierarchy. Moving up the ladder of needs are the self-actualising needs where one fulfils their own potential (*ibid.*, p. 14). There is no doubt belonging, love and acceptance are fundamental to human needs, but these needs are to be met early in childhood, since if the child finds these needs are not fulfilled, she or he will be seeking to fulfil them as adolescents and adults, and these needs may never seem to be fulfilled. Precocious sex as an adolescent is often an attempt to satisfy these unfulfilled psycho-affective needs. The individual is simply looking for the love and security which she or he never experienced as a child.

When a lack of love is traumatically experienced as in some form sexual abuse, sexual addiction is not uncommon because the addict is looking for a way of soothing the pain. “Numbing” or “medicating” the suffering is the terminology commonly used by sexual addicts. Lack of love and distorted sexual exposure may be part of the early childhood experiences that need to be seriously weighed when we discuss satisfying the hierarchy of needs.

Although Maslow offers a more positive alternative to the schools of psychotherapy in response to a deterministic psychotherapy, I am not convinced that Maslow shows a way out of the more negative psychology to something more positive. The fact that someone needs to move up the ladder according to the stages where their needs are met, skipping, or not having the needs satisfied suggests that, “mental illness is forever a reality” (Morgan, 2005, p. 123). That does not sound too optimistic. When does a person experience love, belonging and acceptance in such a way that is appropriate so as to move up to the next step? Moreover, if “Few reach the highest echelon of self-actualisation,” then, it would appear that we are all candidates for mental illness because we fall short of the self-actualising last step.

In *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow explains “peak experiences” occur when the individual has the profound experience of love, understanding, happiness, rapture, or insight, those moments when a person feels “more whole, alive, self-sufficient and yet a part of the world, more aware of truth, justice, harmony, goodness, and so on” (*ibid.*). I agree, and I find that the individuals I meet associate these experiences with spiritual awareness that has brought change, direction and fulfilment in their lives. Maslow considers such peak experiences to be reserved for the few self-actualised people in society. Why such a modest claim? Or has Maslow set the bar too high?

Maslow's humanistic psychology was constructed with the objective of being a third and alternative move from behaviourism and psychoanalysis, with their pessimistic vision of human nature largely due to human instincts suggesting human nature as being defective. This interpretation of the person's defective nature approximates the biblical Christian view of original sin having affected the human condition inclining it towards evil, and requiring divine assistance to overcome these inclinations. Maslow sees such a vision of the person to the detriment of health and wholeness; but the problem remains, that people do suffer, they are unhappy, and people do make bad moral choices.

Maslow also developed the understanding of "neurotic needs" referring to behaviour which is neither productive nor nurturing, and simply does not benefit the person (Maslow, 2011, p. 15). Because these neurotic needs tend to be reactive rather than active, they function to compensate for basic needs that are not met. According to Maslow, the person who seeks self-actualisation must not be neurotic nor have any psychopathic personality disorders. Such a claim seems unrealistic since many — if not most individuals — suffer from some kind of neurosis, and Maslow admits himself that most people suffer from some mental health condition that makes self-realisation difficult.

Related to this difficulty is that the individual must have the, "full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc." (Morgan, 2005, p. 131). Such individuals also have the capacity to deal with needs that may be delayed or even denied; this capacity arises from the fact that such individuals have a good understanding of themselves, and therefore, have a capacity to abstain, to manage without things, or to postpone gratification without feeling that they are being deprived.

Conclusion

Exercising abstinence — or sobriety — is necessary for sexual addicts to combat their addiction. Achieving and maintaining sexual abstinence is an ongoing emotional, psychological and spiritual process of purification and growth. The therapist provides, within the framework of Freud, Frankl or Maslow, the opportunity of a nurturing experience with his or her client through which the client experiences support, affirmation, and self-worth. This also means that progressively outside the clinical context the client can move forward to establish emotionally, psychologically and spiritually satisfying relationships.

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CHAPTER TWO

Conscience in Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*

Dennis J. Billy

Amoris laetitia, Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (Pope Francis 2016), represents the Holy Father's reflection on the two sessions of the Bishops' Synod on Marriage and the Family held at Rome in October of 2014 and 2015. The purpose of these sessions was to examine the present state of these institutions and to see how the Church could help believers nurture the faith in the home in the midst of growing tensions regarding the nature of the family, the state of marriage, and their role in society. The document acknowledges these tensions and seeks to maintain a healthy balance between the vision and reality, official Church teaching, and the actual situation of families today. In doing so, the document has become the topic of lively debate. The Pope's understanding of the role of conscience in maintaining this delicate equilibrium plays a significant role in his teaching.

The Exhortation's Hermeneutical Structure

Although he embodies more pastoral sensitivity to the people, Pope Francis stands in continuity with his immediate

predecessors. If John Paul II was an actor on the world stage, and Benedict XVI was the world's teacher, Francis may be seen as the world's pastor. It bears noting that Pope Emeritus Benedict is on record as saying that he is satisfied with the papacy of Francis and sees no contradictions between their pontificates (Catholic News Agency 2016).

At the very outset, Francis sets up a creative tension between the Church's vision of marriage and family and the harsh realities of everyday life. This can be seen in the way the exhortation's nine chapters are arranged:

VISION	Chapter 1—Scriptural Basis (nos. 9-30)
REALITY	Chapter 2—Experience and Challenges (nos. 31-57)
VISION	Chapter 3—Church Teaching (nos. 58-88)
VISION	Chapter 4—Teaching on Marital and Familial Love (nos. 89-164)
VISION	Chapter 5—The Fruitfulness of Marriage (nos. 165-198)
REALITY	Chapter 6—Some Pastoral Approaches (nos. 199-258)
REALITY	Chapter 7—Better Educating Our Children (nos. 259-290)
REALITY	Chapter 8—Accompanying, Discerning, Integrating Weakness (nos. 291-312)
VISION	Chapter 9—Spirituality of Marriage and Family (nos. 313-325)

According to this outline, an initial triptych of chapters places the present-day experience and challenges of family life

(chapter 2) against the backdrop of Christian revelation as found in Scripture (chapter 1) and Tradition (chapter 3). This opening triptych is followed by three diptychs that treat the Church's vision of marital and familial life (chapters 4-5), the need for concrete pastoral approaches in dealing with marital and familial love (chapters 6-7), and the need for finding ways to accompany those on the journey (chapter 8), while at the same time holding firm to the Church's teaching on marriage and family (chapter 9). When taken together, these chapters show Francis' concern for keeping the vision of the Church's teaching on marriage and family alive, while seeking to find ways of reaching out to those who have fallen short of that vision and find themselves in difficult (and, at times, even dysfunctional) situations.

Any attempt to analyze the exhortation needs to take this organic interplay between "vision" and "reality" into account. According to the hermeneutical circle, a valid interpretation of a text must examine the whole in relationship to its individual parts—and vice versa (Hoy 1982, vii-viii). Much of the controversy surrounding the document, since the time of its promulgation, stems from a tendency to overlook this very basic principle of interpretation.

Four Key Texts

The exhortation contains a number of key texts that serve as interpretative guideposts for ascertaining its message. Taken together, they help us come to a better understanding of the role conscience should play in the central issues related to marriage and family.

Four, in particular, stand out for the way in which they guide the discussion of how Pope Francis' exhortation should be received, digested, and ultimately implemented:

1. “[T]ime is greater than space” (no. 3)
2. “I do not recommend a rushed reading of the text” (no. 7).
3. “We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them” (no. 37).
4. “Let us not forget that the Church’s task is often like that of a field hospital” (no. 291).

1. The first of these texts highlights the role that process plays in the spiritual journey. Pope Francis makes it clear that not all issues of doctrinal, moral, or pastoral import need to be settled by the magisterium in a “one size fits all” manner. Although unity in Church teaching and practice is necessary, there are a number of ways in which a particular country or region could interpret and adapt certain aspects of that teaching to specific circumstances. We need to patiently wait on the Spirit and give it time to reveal its will and guide us to the truth (no. 3).

2. The second text is related to the first and emphasizes the need to read the text slowly and in a contemplative manner. Rather than rushing through the exhortation in order to isolate its most important content, Pope Francis invites us to examine the text first as a whole and then move on to those sections relevant to our particular situation. Married couples, he says, will be more concerned with chapters four and five; pastoral ministers, with chapter six; everyone, in his mind, should be challenged by chapter eight. The text, in other words, needs to be pondered and digested slowly so that everyone will feel called to love and cherish family life (no. 7).

3. The third text highlights a major responsibility of the magisterium: to help the faithful form their consciences. The Pope points out that this responsibility has sometimes been misinterpreted to mean that the magisterium should settle all

moral matters in all situations and circumstances. Although the Catholic faithful are called to form their consciences in the light of Church teaching, when their informed judgment steers them in another direction, they are bound to follow that judgment under penalty of sin. While actions flowing from this judgment cannot be considered meritorious, they are nevertheless bound to follow their sincere but erroneous conscience (no. 37).

4. The fourth and final text emphasizes the Church's role in healing wounded humanity. Just as Jesus ate with publican and sinners, the Church is called to reach out to those who have been wounded by sin and meet them where they are. This medical metaphor preserves the tension between "vision" and "reality" that permeates so much of the document. A doctor knows the signs of a healthy person and keeps that vision foremost in his mind as the ultimate goal of his medical practice. He meets the sick in the reality of their circumstances and accompanies them on their journey back to health. When seen in this light, the key question for all pastoral practice is whether the people under their care are getting healthier or more ill. That is to say, are they drawing closer to Jesus or moving farther away? (no. 291).

When taken together these texts provide the general context within which Pope Francis offers his reflections on marriage and family and contribute a great deal to how we are to approach the document and interpret it in the light of the Church's traditional teaching. They also prepare the way for an elucidation of the exhortation key guiding principles.

Five Guiding Pillars

Francis also builds his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation around five basic principles:

1. Pastoral Discernment

2. Pastoral Accompaniment
3. The Law of Gradualism
4. The Logic of Pastoral Mercy
5. The Notion of Graced Imperfection

1. Francis mentions “Pastoral Discernment” thirteen times in his Exhortation (cf. nos. 6, 26, 72, 79, 151, 242, 243, 244, 293, 296, 297, 298, 300). This notion is concerned with sifting through the various options and separating the wheat from the chaff. It means distinguishing the various nuances among the variety of options before one and opting for the one that best suits achieving the desired end by way of the most appropriate means. It looks to deal with concrete pastoral situations with a view toward finding the best solution possible under the existing circumstances.

2. “Pastoral Accompaniment” appears four times in the document (cf. nos. 223, 241, 243, 300). It takes this discernment one step further in that it says the Church will offer someone—possibly a priest, deacon, or pastoral minister—to journey with those seeking assistance as they seek to embody the Church’s vision of marriage and family in the concrete circumstances of their daily lives.

3. “The Law of Gradualism” occurs eight times in the document (cf. nos. 122, 151, 264, 273, 293, 295, 300, 317). It recognizes that every journey takes place one-step at a time. It takes the larger picture into consideration and seeks to encourage those seeking help to look at even the smallest signs of progress as an indication of spiritual growth and renewal.

4. “The Logic of Pastoral Mercy” appears twenty-to times in the exhortation (cf. nos. 5, 6, 27, 47, 49, 60, 64, 91, 253, 290, 291, 296, 297, 300, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 322, 325). It focuses on God’s love for the world and his desire to

pour out upon each open hear the depths of his infinite mercy. It says that God understands the depths of our human weakness and counters that lack with an overflow of divine grace leading to new life.

5. Finally, the notion (if not the precise words) of “Graced Imperfection,” is found thirteen times in the document (cf. 56, 66, 103, 105, 113, 115, 117, 135, 140, 277, 290, 296, 308). It seeks to integrate human weakness with the overall movement of God’s action in the world. It wishes to emphasize God’s triumph over sin and death by looking to the ways in which God works in the darkness corners of the human heart to cast out evil and announce the coming of the kingdom.

These five principles are not isolated concepts, but are meant to interrelate in a vital way to assist Church ministers in their attempt to lead people in their spiritual journey. The Church is called to meet people where they are and help them face the reality of their lived experience— with all of its frailty, weakness, and sinfulness— and lead them to the vision of Christian wholeness.

This movement from the reality to vision, from the frailty of human existence to fullness of life in Christ does not take place instantaneously, but in a series of slow, steady, progressive steps. First, the Church seeks to help people come to an awareness of their actual situation and recognize how much they fall short of God’s plan for them. After this initial discernment takes place, the Church seeks to accompany the faithful on their journey to wholeness. This takes place gradually, usually in small steps that bring the person closer to their goal. When steps are taken that move a person away from their envisioned goal, the Church meets them with mercy and helps them get back on track. This journey to wholeness integrates weakness into the Christian journey without blessing it. It recognizes that God’s

grace works in the midst of our human imperfections and seeks to transform them.

Conscience in Amoris laetitia

The key texts and principles outlined above put us in a position to deal with the role that Pope Francis assigns to conscience in the document. *Amoris laetitia* is a lengthy document of 325 paragraphs and some 261 pages in length. Although the term “conscience” appears only fourteen times in only eight paragraphs, the concept forms an important part of the document’s overall interpretative background. Listed below are the key passages.

Chapter Two:

“The Experiences and Challenges of Families”

- We also need to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them (no. 37).

- The upright consciences of spouses who have been generous in transmitting life may lead them, for sufficiently serious reasons, to limit the number of their children, yet precisely ‘for the sake of this dignity of conscience, the Church strongly rejects the forced State intervention in favor of contraception, sterilization and even abortion’ (no. 42)

Chapter Six:

“Some Pastoral Perspectives”

- Decisions involving responsible parenthood presuppose the formation of conscience, which is ‘the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There each one is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of the heart’ (*Gaudium et spes*, 16). The more the couple tries to listen in conscience to God and his commandments (cf. Rom 2:15), and is accompanied spiritually, the more their decision will be profoundly free of subjective caprice and accommodation to prevailing social mores” (no. 222).

Chapter Seven:

“Toward a Better Education of Children”

- Doing what is right means more than “judging what seems best” or knowing clearly what needs to be done, as important as this is. Often we prove inconsistent in our own convictions, however firm they may be; even when our conscience dictates a clear moral decision, other factors sometimes prove more attractive and powerful. We have to arrive at the point where the good that the intellect grasps can take root in us as a profound affective inclination, as a thirst for the good that outweighs other attractions and helps us to realize that what we consider objectively good is also good “for us” here and now. A good ethical education includes showing a person that it is in his own interest to do what is right. Today, it is less and less effective to demand

something that calls for effort and sacrifice, without clearly pointing to the benefits which it can bring (no. 265).

Chapter Eight:

“Accompanying, Discerning, and Integrating Weakness”

- One thing is a second union consolidated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self-giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins. The Church acknowledges situations “where, for serious reasons, such as the children’s upbringing, a man and woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate”. There are also the cases of those who made every effort to save their first marriage and were unjustly abandoned, or of “those who have entered into a second union for the sake of the children’s upbringing, and are sometimes subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably broken marriage had never been valid” (no. 298).
- Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop. Useful in this process is an examination of conscience through moments of reflection and repentance” (no. 300).

- Pastoral discernment, while taking into account a person's properly formed conscience, must take responsibility for these situations. Even the consequences of actions taken are not necessarily the same in all cases (no. 302).

- Recognizing the influence of such concrete factors, we can add that individual conscience needs to be better incorporated into the Church's praxis in certain situations which do not objectively embody our understanding of marriage. Naturally, every effort should be made to encourage the development of an enlightened conscience, formed and guided by the responsible and serious discernment of one's pastor, and to encourage an ever greater trust in God's grace. Yet conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one's limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal. In any event, let us recall that this discernment is dynamic; it must remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions which can enable the ideal to be more fully realized (no. 303).

These passages occur in those sections of *Amoris laetitia* where Francis addresses the real problems and concerns of marriage and family today. They also occur in conjunction with many of the key texts and principles that form the hermeneuti-

cal backbone of the document. As we shall see, Francis does not develop the Church's teaching on conscience, but reaffirms it and places it in a more pastoral context. Throughout the document, he emphasizes the dignity and inviolability of human conscience that was one of the hallmark teachings of the Vatican II (Second Vatican Council 1965, no 16).

In the Light of Catholic Teaching

The Catholic Church has a rich and very profound teaching on conscience, one that has developed over the years and that lends itself to a great deal of nuance. Human beings, it states, are capable of knowing what is good, because they are created in the image of God and are *capax Dei*, that is, "capable of God" (Aquinas 1920, III, a. 1, ad 2). Our knowledge of the good comes to us from the outside through revelation and also from within through the law imprinted by God in our heart (Pope John Paul II 1993, nos. 45-46). For this reason, human morality is neither autonomous, nor heteronomous, but theonomous (Pope John Paul II 1993, no. 41). That is to say, it comes to us from God, at one and the same time, from both within and without. The Second Vatican Council calls conscience the *vox Dei*, that is, "the voice of God" (Second Vatican Council 1965, no. 16). That voice functions as a capacity, known in the tradition as "synderesis," a process known in the tradition as "deliberation", and a judgment known in the tradition as "conscience" or the "judgment of conscience." (Aquinas 1920, I, q. 79, aa. 1-2; I-II, q.14, a. 1). We must also bear in mind that, according to Catholic teaching, one of the results of humanity's primeval fall from grace was a weakening of our rational powers. The power of conscience, which was once ablaze in the human mind, has dimmed considerably and is not as capable of discerning good from evil as it once was. In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas, who calls

“synderesis” a habit of the practical intellect holding the primary principles of natural law, elsewhere refers to it as the *scintilla conscientiae* or the “spark of conscience” (Aquinas 1954, q. 17, a. 2, ad 3). Although that spark will never go out, it is capable of being covered over and even numbed by worldly concerns and endeavors.

There are several types of conscience: correct, erroneous, bad, weak, scrupulous, lax, and informed. A correct conscience is in accordance with God’s Word and the teachings of the Church. An erroneous conscience is contrary to God’s Word and the teachings of the Church. A bad conscience has no regard for objective truth and has not even bothered to distinguish right from wrong. A weak conscience knows the difference between right and wrong, but does not have the strength to do what is right. A scrupulous conscience thinks it is always sinning when it actually is not. A lax conscience is insensitive to the good to be done or the evil to be avoided. An informed conscience seeks to educate itself about a particular moral issue. It is possible for person to have a sincere but erroneous conscience. It is also possible for a person’s conscience to be invincibly ignorant of the good to be done or evil to be avoided (Odozor 2003, 197-99).

For our present purposes, we also need to recognize the wide range of opinions that theologians have given to the authority of conscience when it comes in conflict with the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. St. Bonaventure, for example, says that in such a case a person is bound to change his or her conscience. This is a tutorist position, which always advises to take the safer course (Potts, 1980, 114-15). St Thomas Aquinas, by way of contrast, says that a person is bound to follow his or her conscience, but that the resulting action could not be meritorious. He bases his opinion on a saying from the Pseudo-Dionysius, which says: “... good results from a whole and entire cause, whereas evil results from each single defect.” (Aquinas

1920, I-II, q. 71, a. 5, ad 1; Pseudo-Dionysius (1987, 93). Departing from both Bonaventure and Aquinas, St. Alphonsus de Liguori says that in such a case a person is bound to follow his or her conscience and that the resulting action can even be meritorious (Liguori 1953, I, nos. 4-7). Here are three saints and Doctors of the Church with three very different positions on the authority of conscience. It bears noting that in *Veritatis splendor* Pope St. John Paul II opts for the position of Aquinas (Pope John Paul II 1993, no 63).

As stated earlier, Pope Francis does not develop the Church's teaching on conscience but redirects it by giving it a more pastoral emphasis. A Jesuit by theological training and spiritual intuition, he highlights the importance of spiritual discernment and tends toward the probabilist position in moral theology which states that, in the case of a doubt, a person is free to follow any sound theological opinion, even if there are more convincing arguments to the contrary (Rey-Mermet 1998, 11, 165). His pastoral application of conscience to irregular situations presupposes the Church's vision, but recognizes the need to meet people where they are and accompany them on their journey from their real-life situation to the vision embodied in Church teaching. His pastoral orientation of conscience in dealing with irregular situations steers a middle course between the teachings of Aquinas and Liguori. Using these categories regarding the authority of conscience, his position may be stated thus:

1. A person is bound to follow a sincere but erroneous conscience, even when it comes in conflict God's Word and official Church teaching.
2. That action cannot be considered meritorious in and of itself, since not every part of the action can be considered good.

3. God's grace, however, can still be at work in this irregular situation, to the extent that it moves a person to lessen the gap existing between vision and reality in his or her life.
4. To the extent that it draws him or her closer to that vision, it can be considered meritorious in a secondary, contextual sense, one that offers viable, ancillary help for the spiritual journey.

Francis' pastoral application of conscience represents a sincere desire on his part to remain faithful to Church teaching, while also extending an understanding and compassionate heart to those in irregular and very difficult circumstances. His teaching in no way represents a watering down or dilution of Church teaching, but is a way of navigating the turbulent waters of the world today with dignity and grace.

Conclusion

When interpreting *Amoris laetitia* and its significance for the Church today, much depends on whether those commenting on the document are employing what Pope Emeritus Benedict calls a "hermeneutic of continuity" or a "hermeneutic of discontinuity" (Pope Benedict XVI 2005). While the former generally leads to a sympathetic reading of the text, the latter tends to provoke consistent (often unwarranted) criticism. Besides these different hermeneutical approaches to the text, it is also important to take the hermeneutical circle into account by interpreting the particulars of the document in the light of the whole—and vice versa. Not to do so runs the risk of limiting the meaning of the exhortation to a few points on Church discipline, rather than interpreting those points in the light of the organic whole.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis emphasizes the dignity of conscience and offers a highly nuanced position that reflects a Jesuit emphasis on discernment and probabilistic reasoning, while at the same time steering a middle course on the authority of conscience that lies between (and is roughly compatible with) the positions of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Alphonsus de Liguori. In doing so, he remains faithful to the Catholic tradition and propels it forward by offering a strong pastoral emphasis that seeks to accompany and be of help to those who find themselves in irregular situations in the Church. His highly nuanced, organic teaching brings to mind Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel: "...every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old" (Mt 13:52).

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CHAPTER THREE

Who Am I Called to Be?

A Personal Reflection on Life Vocations Counseling

Michael L. Brock

It was in the seventh grade that I encountered the first memorable response to the question that would come to define my spiritual journey, *Who am I called to be?*

That was not the exact phrasing of the question. After all, it was posed by a classmate. His precise words were more along the lines of, *How do you know if you have a vocation to the religious life?* But the response Brother Joseph gave to that question has stayed with me these past fifty-plus years, and his wisdom, offered in the simplest of words, continues to ring true.

Who Am I Called to Be?

A little background: I attended Catholic schools from grade one through the completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from the University of Dallas in 1970. Grades one through five took place at the local parish school in Bronx, New York, where I was raised, but for grades six through eight, my

parents transferred me to a school in Manhattan that was run by a religious order, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, identified by the initials FSC (for *Fratres Scholarum Christianarum*, its official Latin title). Not ministerial priests, brothers are men called to service in education. Typically, they teach in Catholic secondary schools and universities—although due to various societal changes since the 1960’s their numbers have dramatically declined. They were my teachers, almost exclusively, from grades six through twelve; the high school I attended, Manhattan College Prep, was also staffed by the Christian Brothers, as they were more familiarly known. During those seven years, every one of my classmates and every teacher I had was male. (Things changed, and rather dramatically, when I left home for college in Dallas.)

An introverted, introspective youngster, I very much enjoyed school, and not much has changed in that regard over the intervening years. Religion class was particularly interesting as it provided a natural forum for deeper questions, including the somewhat off-the-subject variety, and it appeared that the brothers enjoyed fielding our questions as much as we enjoyed asking them. They probably appreciated a break from the catechism memorization as much as we did.

One question we could always count on surfacing concerned the discernment of religious vocations, specifically, *How do you know if you are called to be a brother?* Typically, the teacher’s responses would include references to periods of prayer, Scripture reading, attendance at daily Mass, perhaps fasting and other sacrifices, all designed to better hear God’s word—for it was God’s word and God’s will that surely mattered most. And that day in seventh grade I was prepared for the same.

But it wasn’t what I heard. Instead, Brother Joseph hesitated a moment or two, then replied: “How do you know if you

have a vocation to the religious life? You ask yourself: Is this something I very much *want* to do? Would I really *enjoy* doing this work? Ask yourself that, and if your answer is ‘yes’ you might have a vocation.”

Now, Brother Joseph’s response may not have been up to the level of James Hillman’s “each person enters the world called” (Hillman, 1996, p. 7), or Joseph Campbell’s “follow your bliss” (Campbell, 2004, p. xxiv), or Parker Palmer’s invitation to live the “life that wants to live in [you]” (Parker, 2000, p. 2), or Frederick Buechner’s “place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need” (Buechner, 1993, p. 119). But it rang true for me, my twelve-year-old mind appreciating the simplicity of it. And more: It suggested a shift away from an exclusively external orientation to questions about who we are called to be (looking to God or others for answers) to a more internal one (seeking the answer within one’s own heart). If the path to discerning my life vocation leads inward to my own desires, well, that’s a place I can explore freely. That fits my introspective self quite well. It sets me free from external expectations and lets me be the person I feel called to be and to pursue the path that emerges from my own interior dialogue.

Examining the Call

Who am I called to be? The question has stayed with me through the years, leading to a fascination with personality profiles like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Gregorc’s Mind Styles, True Colors, the Strong Interest Inventory, the Enneagram, and various informal Jungian archetypal approaches. My bookshelves are filled with titles like *Do What You Are*, *Gifts Differing*, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, and *Soultypes*, the authors of which not only explore the variations of personality but often point to a deeper spiritual source.

In 2000, I began a master's program in counseling, a later life career change that I now see as yet another step in my journey of discovering the person I am called to be. (Before then, I had followed in the footsteps of Brother Joseph and become a teacher, though of the laical, not ministerial, variety.) One course in the master's program for licensed professional counselors is career counseling, among the curriculum components of which is an introduction to several personality style instruments designed to help the user better identify a career path that would fit his or her personality—with 'personality' understood as one's unique mix of temperament and environmental influences, largely in the family. Career counseling is largely about the alignment of personality and career and in practice rarely goes deeper than what various interest inventories might reveal. That is not intended as a critique of career counseling; rather, it suggests the natural limitations of the discipline. But as Jungian-trained psychologist James Hillman suggests in *The Soul's Code*, we are not reducible to the effects of temperament and upbringing; there is a uniqueness about each of us that is located in that place we call the soul. It is the soul that contains the seeds of our life vocation, and it is our task and responsibility to recognize and nurture those seeds.

When we move from the world of career counseling, with its emphasis on personality traits, toward a world wherein the soul is identified as the essence of the person and, consequently, the essence of who we are called to be, we open ourselves to another approach to the discernment of vocation or life calling. This is an approach closer in spirit to the word 'psychotherapy,' from the Greek *psukhe* (breath, spirit, soul) and *therapeia* (healing), and is distinguished by its goal of highlighting the spiritual dimension of one's life path. In rather broad terms, it could be called spiritual counseling.

In 2008, my lifelong quest to grapple with the question of who I am called to be led to a three-year Ignatian-based training and formation program in spiritual direction led by Methodist minister and Graduate Theological Foundation alumnus Bob Gardenhire, D.Min. Six years after completion of that training, I would graduate from the GTF with a doctorate in clinical and pastoral psychotherapy, yet another step in my spiritual journey. And as both a licensed psychotherapist and a spiritual director, I now find myself wondering about the distinction between the two. Is the line between counseling and spiritual direction distinct and clearly defined? Or is it more about shades of difference, one discipline blurring into the other? In conversation with a colleague, a professional career coach recently commissioned by her church to offer spiritual direction, we discussed the unexpected similarities in her two roles and explored the emergence of the life path theme in several of the helping professions, including life coaching, career coaching, clinical counseling, spiritual counseling, and spiritual direction. Whichever discipline is our starting point, we have a rich body of work from which to draw and much to offer the client who is seeking clarity about his or her life vocation.

To ground ourselves in this realm of the soul within the specific topic of life vocations, it would be helpful to look briefly at four writers who have directed much of their energies toward the question of discovering one's life path—James Hillman, Parker Palmer, Joseph Campbell, and Frederick Buechner.

Four Guides for the Journey

James Hillman, 1926–2011, was a Jungian-trained psychologist who introduced his “acorn theory” as a metaphor for the natural development of one's life vocation in *The Soul's Code*, published in 1996. Emphasizing that personality is

more than nature and nurture, he notes that “each person hears a uniqueness that asks to be lived and that is already present before it can be lived” (Hillman, 1996, p. 6), a uniqueness to which he gives many names: acorn, calling, fate, character, destiny, innate image, daimon, heart, soul. “Each person enters the world called” (Hillman, 1996, p. 7), and it is the soul that does the calling; discover the key, or code, to your soul and you will discover your life vocation.

Hillman fleshes out his thinking with a neat three-part prescription for being the person you are called to be: 1. Recognize the call of the soul as a prime fact of your existence, 2. align your life with that call, and 3. know that what we call accidents, or seemingly random occurrences, “belong to the pattern of the image [of the soul], are necessary to it, and help fulfill it” (Hillman, 1996, p. 8). He invites us to discover the unique destiny to which we are called, a destiny present from our earliest years and often revealed through our childhood stories and fantasies. He expresses frustration with psychologies of the self that stop at the level of temperament or personality and is equally unimpressed with neurological descriptions of the self. Hillman speaks of the soul as calling us to be, choosing the life circumstances we need to help us fulfill that call, even—in a flight of fancy suggesting his Jungian inclinations—selecting just the right parents to bring us into this life and support us in that calling. Our job is to recognize that calling and align ourselves with it.

Hillman’s insight that we are more than our personality and that that more is what we refer to as soul is critical to our work in spiritual counseling. Although various personality profiles such as the MBTI can serve our clients in gaining understanding of how temperament and early life experiences affect the way we interface with the world (the way we prefer to pray, for example, is affected by our personality style, as described by

Sandra Krebs Hirsh in *Soultypes*), it is the soul that holds, softly and tenderly, our unique expression as an irreplaceable and personally called child of God. Hillman suggests, as did Brother Joseph in that seventh grade classroom so long ago, that our life vocation is discovered by looking within, observing what is there—what touches us, what lives inside us, what brings us joy in life—and aligning ourselves with it.

Parker Palmer, born in 1939, is a spiritual author, educator, and humanist in the Quaker tradition, perhaps best known through his “Courage to Teach” program, which has inspired educators for decades. In *Let Your Life Speak*, published in 2006, he established himself as one of the foremost, and most accessible, spokespersons in life vocations counseling. Somewhat biographical, the book recounts Palmer’s arriving at the conclusion while working in school administration that he was living a life “that was not my own, a life spent imitating heroes instead of listening to my heart” (Palmer, 2000, p. 13), an experience to which many of us can readily relate. With this revelation, Palmer rejected the understanding of vocation arrived at through sheer force of will, a task necessitated by the premise that the person is sin-ridden and needs to conquer the deep-seated instincts that lead one astray. He opts instead for an image of the person as one of health and wholeness, stemming not from a state of original sin but from one of original blessing, as the title of a celebrated book by Episcopal priest Matthew Fox affirms. Life vocation, he would come to see, is not so much willed as it is heard—from that still, small voice celebrated by the Quaker tradition. It is not imposed but intuited, less a goal than a calling: “I must listen to the truths and values at the heart of my own identity.” (Palmer, 2000, p. 4-5).

For Palmer, more important than the question, *What should I do?*, is the question, *Who am I?*, followed by the permission to grow into the person we are called to be “whether or

not it conforms to some image of who we *ought* to be” (Palmer, 2000, p. 16, italics in original). This is not egocentrism, Parker notes. Quite the opposite: “One dwells with God by being faithful to one’s nature; one crosses God by trying to be something one is not.” (Palmer, 2000, p. 51). And he recommends a healthy dose of inner work to stay true to this: “If people skimp on their inner work, their outer work will suffer as well” (Palmer, 2000, p. 91).

Joseph Campbell, 1904-1987, mythologist and Sarah Lawrence English professor for over fifty years, is best known for his celebrated *Hero with a Thousand Faces* and his PBS interviews with Bill Moyers. In the “Introduction” to *Pathways to Bliss*, a “collected works” volume published posthumously in 2004, Campbell defines the word that has become a catchphrase in life vocations work: “bliss is that deep sense of being present, of doing what you absolutely must do to be yourself” (Campbell, 2004, p. xxiii). Further: “bliss is the welling up of the energy of the transcendent wisdom within you” (Campbell, 2004, p. xxiv), and he challenges the reader “to find your own pathway to bliss” (Campbell, 2004, p. xxvi). And in *The Power of Myth*, published in 1988, he observes that “if you do follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living” (Campbell, 1998, p. 150).

Noting that this pathway to bliss emerges more from within the self—the word ‘self’ understood in Jungian terms as encompassing both the conscious ego and, significantly, the unconscious realm, both the personal and the collective—he challenges the reader to discover the individual myth that is propelling one’s life. The individual myth is the great story one is called to live out, the quest we are undertaking, our own personal pathway to bliss.

How do we discover our personal myth, our life story, our destiny? Campbell notes several pathways—retrospection, the art of looking back over our lives and noting conspicuous plots or themes, an exercise that might include the revisiting of old diaries from our youth; journal writing, including dream journaling, and the notation of recurring themes; reflection on early childhood memories with an eye toward the common threads contained therein; recognition of the universal images and symbols that resonate for us; and making the effort to identify our own personal hero myths. On this final point, I recall working with a young man in life vocation counseling who, through our discussions, fixed on the Scottish hero William Wallace featured in the Academy Award-winning film *Braveheart* as his personal hero myth. He wanted to charge into the world, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the downtrodden, regardless of personal sacrifice. You can't help but celebrate—and encourage—that spirit.

Frederick Buechner, born in 1926, is a Presbyterian minister and renowned author, having received numerous awards for both his fiction and nonfiction, including finalist for the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Pastoral counselors have turned to his cogent and quite humorous words on life and faith for decades. As a commentator on life vocations counseling, Buechner gave us the often quoted reference to the intersection between one's deep gladness and the world's deep needs as the locus of what we are called to be. In *Wishful Thinking*, he responds to the question, *How does one know one's life vocation?*, as follows: "By and large a good rule for finding out is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to do is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. ... The place God calls you to be is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (Buechner, 1993, pp. 118-119) In those words, Buechner

succinctly transcends the subtle dialectic that often underpins life vocations counseling, that between submission to the will of God, on the one hand, and the honoring of one's personal inclinations and bliss, on the other: The two, he says, are the same. No one has said it better.

Discovering the Deepest Self

“Each person enters the world called.” “Is the life you are living the life that wants to live in you?” “Follow your bliss.” “Where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet.” All call for us to peer within the self and to open ourselves to our unique call. But how do we do that? No pen-and-paper test will reveal it, although, as noted, personality profiles can start us thinking in that direction. Here are a few questions I have found helpful in directing attention toward the deeper parts of the self:

- What are some moments from your childhood when you felt most at peace with yourself?
- What are the stories and adventures you most related to as a child?
- Who were your childhood heroes?
- What feedback have you received from others through the years about your gifts and talents?
- What do you enjoy doing so much that when you are engaged in it you find yourself lost in time?
- Tell me a story from your earlier years when you saw yourself as a giving, loving person doing something of value with or for others?
- Through what experiences in life have you been able to see yourself as a capable person, a signifi-

cant and appreciated person, and a person who can effect changes and influence outcomes?

- When you listen to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, what gifts do you recognize in yourself?
- What are some moments in which you experience awe and wonder?
- What are some moments in which you experience God's presence?
- Is the life you are living the same as the life that wants to live in you? (Palmer)
- Are you following your deepest bliss? (Campbell)
- To what do you hear yourself called? (Hillman)
- Where does your deep gladness intersect with what the world most needs? (Buechner)

Will This Career Work for Me?

The identification of one's life path is a larger challenge than the decision to pursue a particular career; in fact, for some the life path precludes that of a career, as in the choice to be a stay-at-home parent. Nonetheless, for most of us the career we choose is an integral part of our journey, defining how we respond over time to what the world is asking of us. Benefiting from the insights of Hillman, Palmer, Campbell, and Buechner, and moving to the very practical challenge of evaluating a specific career path, I offer the following five questions for career discernment:

1. Are you passionate—or could you imagine yourself being passionate—about the career choice? Could you imagine

yourself joyfully anticipating doing this work? Would it fill you with bliss?

2. Do you have the talent, training, education, life experiences, and personality for this work, or could you develop the skills needed to compensate for any shortcomings in those areas? Could you see yourself being good at this work?

3. If you were doing this work, would you be doing good in the world through it? In the microcosm of the world in which you might have some measure of influence, could you see yourself contributing to the betterment of others and/or the protection of the natural world?

4. Does the world need this work? Does it address some current physical, spiritual, aesthetic, technological, cultural, or social need? The humor columnist Dave Barry once wrote an article about a group of middle-aged men who met regularly on Saturday mornings to build and activate catapults. Whatever our opinion might be of the value of spending Saturdays engaged in the construction of medieval siege weaponry, we can all agree that in our twenty-first century world there is little market interest in that. For these men, playing with catapults is a hobby—an avocation, not a vocation. If something you're passionate about isn't needed in today's world (or, sadly, needed but not appreciated as such), you are free to continue to enjoy it—as an avocation.

5. Could you provide food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and recreation for yourself and those who might depend upon you through this work? Could you make an adequate living? I place this last intentionally as I believe that if we can answer the first four questions in the affirmative, this fifth will fall readily into place.

The process of discerning one's life vocation is one that might benefit from work in several disciplines, including the targeted use of personality profiles and interest inventories in

career counseling, psychotherapy focused on probing the core of the self and what might be getting in the way, and spiritual direction or spiritual counseling that touches the soul. In words we can take as an affirmation of the counseling craft, Hillman, referencing the work that needs to be done to help those trying to discern a life path, notes that “therapists will be in the front lines of this fight because of their capacity for and training in love.” (Hillman, 1996, p. 24) And love leads directly to the spiritual—the soul; the still, small voice; the deepest self; the center of being—wherein we confront ourselves at the point at which God and our deepest bliss meet.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Forming Responsive Spiritual Care Interventions Through Interdisciplinary Team Communication and Informal Assessment

Bea Broder-Oldach

Health care increasingly emphasizes care of the whole person — body, mind and spirit. Caring for the whole person is in keeping with the roots of American medicine, with its foundational values of service, altruism and compassionate care intended to alleviate suffering and enhance overall health. Christina Puchalski M.D. of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health reflects on the complexity of American medicine in these times. Compassionate care is held in tension with technological advancement and stewardship of resources. Healthy individuals and communities require the meaningful integration of practice excellence with medicine’s prime mission as “service to the whole person with care and compassion.” (George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, 2017)

Etymology is the study of the roots of words. An exploration of the etymology of healthcare vocabulary reveals a

consistent intention of deep caring toward human beings. For example, the words hospital, hospitality and hospice all originate from the Latin word “*hospitale*”, meaning guest or host. The term “nurse” is drawn from the Latin “*nutricius*” meaning to give nourishment or one who cares for the sick. Spiritual or pastoral care is also an important aspect of holistic care. The term “chaplain” is etymologically rooted as a term naming a clergy role, meaning a purveyor of compassion and generosity. Drawn from the Latin, “*cappellanus*”, meaning “clergyman or keeper of the cloak”, the word chaplain became associated with the story of St. Martin, who took a sword and sliced his cloak in half to share with a man in need. As the keeper of the cloak, the role of the chaplain is differentiated from the clergy role of pastor as minister of word and sacrament in a church setting. The work of the chaplain is grounded in meeting people where they are, then offering companionship and support for their journey, according to their needs.

Values of service and compassion are hard wired into the language of health care. In this time when technology is expanding the field at exponential speeds, the art and science of healthcare is giving renewed attention to these core values through rededication to holistic care of people, with service excellence. Integration and commitment to core values are crucial if providers of care are to offer compassionate professional care from a place of personal balance and wholeness. Workers intending to serve in their field over the long haul must attend to issues of resiliency and self-care as they walk in this complex work drawing upon their energies of body, mind, and spirit. The holistic health and wellbeing of providers of care may depend upon the capacity of the caregiver to remain spiritually connected with the sense of purpose and passion which led them to choose caregiving professions. (Olsen, 2014) This passion for caring for and about others is an expression of the spirituality

of nursing which traces back to Florence Nightingale. (Ortiz, 2010) A lack of integration of personal spirituality with the expectations of the role may erode resiliency in caregivers and magnify feelings of powerlessness and disconnection. This disequilibrium or lack of integration between purpose and practice is implicated in experiences of moral distress and burnout in caregivers. (Ellen H. Elpern, Nov 2005) In seeking to provide high quality work experiences for their associates, healthcare institutions are increasingly integrating hospital chaplains as the spiritual care experts within healthcare teams. Attending to the observed and expressed spiritual care needs of patients, families, and colleagues is the vocation and responsibility of the professional chaplain on the healthcare team.

“Professional board-certified chaplains are the spiritual care specialists on the health care team as doctors and nurses focus on caring for the body, and as the recognition grows that whole-person care encompasses spirit, mind, and body. Chaplains serve those who are ill, family and friend caregivers, and other health care professionals who deal every day with the stress of illness and loss and are trained to help people to identify and draw upon their sources of spiritual strength – regardless of religion or beliefs. As one very experienced professional chaplain says, “In our encounters with people in distress, we walk into some dark places and help bring in light” (Healthcare Chaplaincy Network About Us, 2017).

The presence of a board-certified hospital chaplain on the interdisciplinary team brings a trained observer and practi-

tioner into the hospital setting, as a team member and partner in the care of patients, families and staff. The practice of a dedicated or embedded chaplain within a team is traditional within the field of chaplaincy, having had a presence in the military field noted from the time of ancient Assyria. The dedicated or embedded chaplain becomes part of the fabric or rhythm of life on the medical unit, as participant observer practitioner with expertise in spiritual care. Relationships with the members of the unit community (e.g. patients, families, staff) provide rich opportunities for sharing expertise and experience together. Quality relationships provide opportunities for both quick and extended communication among stakeholders. Communication of issues and concerns may foster new ideas for caring for patient, staff and institutional systems concerns. Strategies in a particular circumstance may include informal and formal assessments, tests of change and targeted initiatives aligned with themes and needs expressed within this community of care. Spiritual care of patients, families and staff intends to honor the strengths and spiritualities of the stakeholders within a particular care situation, while providing specific interventions attentive to areas of stress and responsive to expressed, observed or intuited needs. Meeting participant needs individually and corporately relies heavily upon positive, accepting relationships, mutual respect and sense of connection. (Palmer, 2007) (Rogers, 1961) In the following narrative, shared experiences on the health care team provided informal assessment of spiritual needs within a high acuity hospital unit. Learning inspired specific interventions intended to provide holistic care of patients, families, and staff.

In the Intensive Care Unit of The Jewish Hospital – Mercy Health in the summer of 2016, various members of the healthcare team observed patients and families in challenging experiences of anticipatory and complicated grief. Nurses described their intention to provide excellent and compassionate

care for these needs, and a concern that additional resources and human capacity could perhaps enrich the patient experience and provide resources for the comfort and healing of patients in body, mind and spirit. Staff described feelings of stress and fatigue when providing compassionate, complex medical care to the living, while carrying personal grief related to the deaths of long term patients. The chaplain observed these challenges in the unit and in herself, as colleague and team member. Integrating informal observations, experience and spiritual assessments of the interdisciplinary team, the chaplain made an informal probe to better understand the needs for grief care and resiliency support in the Intensive Care Unit, and to inform resource development and intervention strategy for holistic patient and family care.

Description

During the first quarter of 2016, ICU nurses informally reflected with the unit chaplain regarding grief support for their patients and families. Of concern were patients and families at risk for complicated grief. Nurses reflected upon their observation of the complex needs in patients and families in situations including long hospitalizations, recent and significant loss, anticipated loss in the unit, and the loss of an adult child. The chaplain observed grief as a common theme at work within this community of care.

Grief is an emotional and spiritual experience of suffering or distress following an experience of loss. The grief process is not limited to an experience of death, but may also include other loss experiences as loss of employment, health, and relationships. While people may share some of the same emotions and experiences as they work through grief, the process itself is unique to the individual and family. Most will experience an easing of the physical, emotional and spiritual effects of grief

and they return to their typical way of life. Others may have greater difficulty returning to their lives following a loss.

“Losing a loved one is one of the most distressing and unfortunately, common experiences people face. Most people experiencing normal grief and bereavement have a period of sorrow, numbness, and even guilt and anger. Gradually these feelings ease, and it’s possible to accept loss and move forward. For some people, feelings of loss are debilitating and don’t improve even after time passes. This is known as complicated grief, sometimes called persistent complex bereavement disorder. In complicated grief, painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that an individual has trouble accepting the loss and resuming your own life.” (Staff, 2014)

Several nurses reflected on the challenge of resourcing emotional care of grieving families who leave the care of the ICU team and return home following one or multiple losses during a loved one’s hospital admission. The chaplain joined nurses in forming a hunch that some simple interventions could provide support for families in grief, and support the nurses in providing care aligned with their sense of purpose in their profession. Early identification of patients and families at risk for complicated grief surfaced as possible strategy for improving the quality of care across hospital and community settings through appropriate transition of spiritual and emotional grief support when families leave the hospital for home.

In a study exploring bereavement services in Intensive Care Unit settings, McAdam and Erikson considered the use of bereavement assessment tools in ICUs as a means of developing

appropriate intervention and evaluating bereavement follow up services.

“...most ICUs evaluated their bereavement follow up services through anecdotal methods. (e.g. family or staff feedback) Less than 25% of ICUs used measurable survey data. In addition, most do not use bereavement assessment tools. Because death in the ICU has been associated with a higher burden of psychological symptoms among bereaved family members, (note credits) researchers recommend use of a reliable and valid bereavement risk assessment tool. Use of such a tool can help to identify family members at higher risk for complicated bereavement and help develop beneficial interventions...Intervening for at risk family members may save valuable money and time and is also consistent with recommendations in palliative care guidelines.”
(Jennifer McAdam, March 2016)

At The Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, the ICU chaplain followed 46 unique patients between June 15, 2016 and June 23, 2016, in an informal pilot probe exploring the use of informal assessment of patients and families at risk of complicated grief. Utilizing social history notes from the patient admission record, and informal conversations involving patients, families and hospital staff, risk indicators were identified, evaluated and considered in the forming of spiritual care interventions with patients and families. Risk indicators and protective factors drawn from the Victoria Hospice Society’s Bereavement Risk Assessment Tool (Caelin Rose, 2016) provided guidance in the identification of patients and families at risk for complicated grief.

Process

At admission to ICU, the chaplain reviewed the patient's fact sheet and social notes from the patient chart, at the first point of care. During inpatient stay in the ICU, patient progress notes were reviewed daily, with specific focus on social work notes. Risk indicators and protective factors were noted, using the template for the Victoria Hospice Society's Bereavement Risk Assessment Tool. (Caelin Rose, 2016) (Appendix A) In the presence of two or more of these factors, the chaplain made a follow up visit with the patient and family as appropriate for a spiritual care assessment and care planning.

- Through this review of these specific areas of the patient chart, two or more risk indicators for complicated grief were identified in 9 patients. These 9 patients were then visited by the hospital chaplain. Within the spiritual care conversations, 6 of these 9 patients shared sources of support and resilience through connections with church, family, and other significant friendships. Two or more protective factors were present in the narratives of these 6 patients. No further grief care intervention was implemented with these 6 patients.
- Of the three remaining patients having two or more risk indicators, each had experienced multiple and recent losses, involving violence, or unexpected death of a close friend or family member(s). Each patient was noted as having habitual involvement with alcohol and street drugs.
- Two patients had experienced the loss of the support of a spouse or significant other through death or relationship loss.

- Two patients were noted as having made multiple, recent suicide attempts. Unstable housing was an issue for one individual.

In the presence of multiple risk indicators and limited protective factors, the chaplain made a follow up visit to offer grief support materials and spiritual companionship.

- One patient declined spiritual care. This patient's family declined grief resources. On transfer to medical floor, this patient was assigned to a staff nurse with expertise with issues involved in chemical dependency and with community recovery resources.
- One patient accepted a referral for mental health consultation. This patient's family members were accepting of spiritual care visitation during hospital stay.
- One patient was unavailable for a spiritual care visit due to medical testing and care. This patient's family members were accepting of spiritual care visitation during hospital stay.

Learnings

Informal probes can be valuable in surfacing themes in the patient experience, offering ideas and direction in the design of resources and interventions in the spiritual care of patients and families. In this probe, anecdotal observation and informal chart review offered a window into possible risk indicators and protective factors in assessing the risk for complicated grief in patients and families. Informal screening at admission may be

helpful to the care team in early identification of patients and families in need of grief support during hospitalization and at discharge. Positive nurse-patient and nurse-family relationships seemed to foster candid conversations regarding grief and loss. When the grief narrative of the patient and family are shared in trust through the interdisciplinary team, team members can informally collaborate for grief support during inpatient stay and at discharge.

Resource and Practice Enhancement

At The Jewish Hospital, a variety of spiritual and emotional support resources are housed throughout the hospital in comfort care stations. As learnings from the probe have been processed and discussed, enhancements to the hospital's comfort care resources have been implemented. When goals of care for patients and families focus on comfort, the care team seeks to create a peaceful, homelike atmosphere for patients and their families. The comfort stations are maintained to include an inventory of spiritual care items including Bibles, prayer beads, prayer shawls, comfort quilts, comfort care teddy bears, inspirational literature, tissues, electric candles, and bereavement support literature. Hospitality is another important aspect of our comfort care. Nutrition Services provides beverages and snacks for families vigiling at the bedside of a loved one. Pandora radio and the Care Channel are available through media sources in patient rooms. Pet therapy, music therapy and healing touch are available to patients on request. Interfaith chaplains and Catholic priests are on call 24/7 as well.

Information was gathered through observation, staff reflection and consultation, and this informal probe provided guidance to the team in identifying the kinds of interventions and resources which might address anticipated and expressed

needs of patients, families and staff. These following resources and practices were introduced into the spiritual care program at The Jewish Hospital:

- The Victoria Hospice Bereavement Risk Assessment Tool has been purchased and is available to the Palliative Care Services, ICU staff and Spiritual Care Services.
- Unit specific condolence cards are sent to families who experience the loss of a loved one while in the Intensive Care Unit. ICU staff are supported in signing cards for their patient families. The hospital chaplain is responsible for identification of the bereaved and the sending of condolences from the Intensive Care and Palliative Care Teams as well as on behalf of other units in the hospital.
- Patients and families discharging from the hospital with multiple risk indicators for complicated grief and/or an experience of traumatic loss in the hospital receive a follow up phone call from the chaplain and a home mailing of bereavement support literature.
- Bereavement support group information, including resources for grieving children and teen agers are available in all comfort care stations.

Summary Statement

In this example, relationships of confidence within the interdisciplinary team fostered a willingness to share knowledge gained through observation and experience, through the lens of the spirituality of nursing. The willingness of nurses to share

their experiences of distress was crucial in identifying issues needing assessment. Team communication and informal assessment provided the staff with a sense of the scope of needs, and with ideas for accessible, appropriate spiritual care interventions. Stakeholders reflected that their experience of the addition of options to the team's toolbox was both helpful and meaningful. Staff members informally communicated feeling supported in their goals of providing holistic care to their patients and families. The alignment of practice with passion and purpose is identified as a critical ingredient in holistic health of caregivers. (Palmer, 2007) (Ortiz, 2010)

Informal assessment grounded in the trust and experience of the team offered a valuable opportunity for the development and implementation of rapid responses to spiritual care needs within the ICU community, while holding the door open for longer studies capable of providing evidence to inform practice and advance the field of spiritual care in medicine.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Across the Divides

*Dimensions of Difference and Implications for
Theological Field Educators in the 21st Century*

C. Anthony Hunt

(This essay was first delivered as the plenary lecture for the 34th Biennial Consultation of the Association for Theological Field Education, January 2017, St. Paul, Minnesota.)

Section One — Dimensions and Dynamics of Diversity in the 21st Century

In a world wrought with social, economic, political and religious upheaval – and with division endemic across much of society and much of the religious spectrum today, many people are asking the question, “Where is God?” Many students who come to theological schools today come asking the very same question, “Where is God?” Many students come today with more questions about the location of God in religion and society than they do with answers about who God is, and where God may be located.

And it is a part of the work of theological field educators to help students locate God so that they can then effectively lead people in the church and the world in the broader quest to locate God.

Over the past several years, in the United States and across the globe, we have become more divided along various lines. In the U.S., the social and political division that we now experience is not really new, but it challenges our sense of normalcy in ways that perhaps we have not been challenged in the past.

This division exists against the backdrop of a burgeoning diversity here and in other parts of the world. I had the opportunity to address a group of scholars in South Bend, Indiana two years ago where those in attendance were mostly North American, but interestingly the group included persons who were nearly equally Christian, Muslim and Jewish – and nearly equally white, black, Hispanic and Asian. I sense that this type of interreligious, intercultural engagement was not unique to that setting, but in some circles, is being challenged and brought into question in light of the overarching concern of what it means to be “American” today.

A part of this nation’s sense of who it says it is is etched in one of our national credos – the Latin phrase *e-pluribus unum* — “Out of Many One.” The implication here is that in the U.S, we have been, and continue to be, many. We are many cultures and ethnicities, many classes and social locations, many religions, many geographies, female and male, with many persuasions and ways of identifying what it means to be human. And yet, the vision that we say we share within the context of this “many” is a vision of somehow also being, becoming one.

In any event, today we experience the challenge of living into this grand vision of realizing what it means to become *e pluribus unum*. Perhaps it is “Divides” which most clearly define us

today, both in society and within religious communities. These Divides are seen in that we are Brown, White, Black, Asian and Indigenous, LGBTQI and “straight,” poor, working class, middle class and wealthy, Republican, Democrat and Independent, south and north, west and east, rural, suburban and urban, conservative, moderate, and liberal, evangelical and progressive, non-denominational and mainline. These “Divides” are seen in that — politically and religiously — we are red, blue and indeed purple (yes purple).

Washington, DC – Anacostia – The Tale of Two Cities

I was born in Washington, DC in the 1960s. It was at a time when — I did not realize until I was a teenager — the nation’s capital was effectively a segregated city. I grew up in a section of DC called Anacostia. For those of us who have grown up in the District of Columbia, lived there for any period of time, or visited and stayed for any length of time, we have come to realize that “Anacostia” is really a euphemism for what it means to live east of the Anacostia River. This river effectively divides DC into east and west, and divides the city in more general ways along lines of what it means to grow up poorer or richer – which is generally evident in the quality of schools, hospital, roads, and so on. In many ways, to borrow a theme from Charles Dickens’ great novel, this speaks to *the tale of two cities*.

Anecdotally, to have been reared in Anacostia carried with it a number of assumptions about who one might become, the length and breadth of one’s social mobility, in life. To be from Anacostia effectively meant that one was reared in a segregated space where at the time of my upbringing was well over 85 percent Black, and largely populated by poor, working-class, and at-best barely above middle-class persons.

This is to say that growing up, to go anywhere west of the Anacostia River meant to cross over into another completely different socio-economic reality. This pronounced “Divide” in the nation’s capital did not really dawn on me until I enrolled in Wesley Theological Seminary in my mid-20s. Wesley Seminary is located on the far northwest side of the city in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the nation, and taking the drive to seminary for three years from my home, which was by then just outside the city where I grew up in Southeast DC, I would drive across this “Divide” daily. I’d drive across the Anacostia River past drug-infested, “blue light” neighborhoods where many young men and women would feel blessed to live to adulthood, then past the national Capitol building, and the grand embassies which house international diplomats and by exclusive private clubs, which growing up, I did not even realize existed, and finally I’d arrive at the seminary.

Baltimore — Sandtown — Another Tale of Two Cities

The 2015 riots in Baltimore, Maryland serve as another vivid reminder of “Divides”. The Sandtown community was the home of the late Freddie Gray who died while in police custody in Baltimore in April 2015. In the aftermath of Mr. Gray’s death, Sandtown found itself in the national spotlight as the epicenter of the riots that erupted across much of Baltimore.

Sandtown encompasses roughly one square mile of Baltimore, and has a poverty rate of well over 60 percent, a high school dropout rate of well over 50 percent, an unemployment rate of over 25 percent, and the second highest heroin addiction rate, per capita, in the U.S. Of the 344 murders in Baltimore in 2015, over 300 were committed in the zip code where Sandtown is located. And yet, within one mile of Sandtown — within walking distance — one can walk in relative safety in several

different directions through the Baltimore Harbor district, the mid-town Business district and the Arts district.

During the Baltimore riots, we witnessed looting and destruction of several drug stores and food markets – destruction and burning of houses, cars and church property. We witnessed lashing out with violence against police officers. We saw the presence of the Maryland National Guard planted down in the city to maintain order on the streets. We saw and experienced what appeared to be hopelessness.

Interestingly, during and in the aftermath of the Baltimore riots, I was contacted by numerous students who had chosen over the preceding few years to do their intercultural immersion studies in Baltimore. During these Baltimore Urban Intercultural Immersions, which are a part of the Practice of Ministry and Mission program at Wesley Seminary, and are designed to help students integrate their classroom learning in the theological disciplines within the context of a culture other than their own, these students had spent several days living in Baltimore — walking, studying, praying and ministering in the same Sandtown community where Freddie Gray had lived and died, and communities like it around Baltimore.

Many of the students who contacted me first of all expressed an appreciation that they had had the opportunity to be immersed in ministry and culture in Baltimore, and to see and interact with people in the very neighborhoods – like Sandtown — that they were now seeing on television. While on these immersions — *as we prayed with our feet, exegeted communities*, entered into the stories of the unhoused, the hungry, the unemployed, and mothers who had lost children to violence on the streets, and encountered churches struggling to remain relevant in gentrifying urban communities — these experiences had served to add texture and relevance to these students' theological education process.

Two students were so moved by what they experienced during a Baltimore Urban Immersion experience in the winter of 2016 that they felt called to return to Baltimore this past summer to spend the entire summer fulfilling a part of their field education requirement serving in ministry in one of the social service agencies which serves the homeless, and which provides healthcare and counseling services to persons affected by AIDS and other health issues and to those who are addicted. They had essentially sensed a calling to, as articulated by Dr. Leah Gunning Francis in her book *Ferguson and Faith*, pray with their feet. (Francis, 19f.)

“Table” as a Place of Meeting for Bridging Divides

Over the course of more than a decade, I have had the privilege of leading groups of scholars from Wesley Theological Seminary in immersion courses that retrace many of the steps of the American Civil Rights movement in Alabama during the 1950s and 60s. These groups are typically comprised of 7-30 masters or doctoral level students, faculty and staff, and we travel for up to two weeks through Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, Alabama.

On all of these immersion experiences, the groups of participants have been very diverse. We are women and men; Whites, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Blacks. We are from various Christian denominations.

We begin each day with singing, praying and reading Scripture, as was the practice in the tradition of the Civil Rights movement. John Lewis, now a U.S. Congressman from Georgia, and one who labored on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement, has intimated that “We never went out without singing and praying.” And so before leaving each morning, we pray,

read Scripture, and sing freedom songs like “Oh Freedom,” “We Shall Overcome,” and “There is a Balm.”

As we travel, reflect and listen together — struggling through many of the difficult paths and realities of those who lived the Civil Rights movement — we invariably sense among ourselves the real possibility that culturally inclusive community — *Beloved Community* — can be realized in our lifetime, and that bridges can indeed be built to help us cross and healthily engage those things that divide us.

Each time we journey, my memory harkens back to one of our trips several years ago, where Dr. Eileen Guenther, a professor at Wesley Seminary who was a part of that study group, offered that it was a spiritual song by many choirs, “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table,” that played in her head throughout our experience (see *The American Organist*, November 2008). Dr. Guenther said that she thought about the variety of tables that we encountered as we traveled through Alabama:

- Lunch counters of restaurants where all had not been welcome (in the past);
- The dining room table in the parsonage of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, in Montgomery, where we were told, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed;
- The kitchen table of the same parsonage where Dr. King searched his soul and felt God telling him to press on with his work;
- The tables at which the people at 16th Street Baptist Church served us lunch, tables placed adjacent to the site of the tragic bombing on September 15, 1963 that killed four young girls;

- The tables around which members of our group gathered to share stories as victims of discrimination, of their courageous work in the Civil Rights movement (and other freedom and human rights causes), and their lament over a lack of awareness of what was going on at that time in America's history.
- The tables around which we laughed together and cried together – celebrating how far we've come, yet realizing the pain inflicted upon those who made it possible for us to be able to sit at table together in light of those things that could yet still be in place to divide us.

At the conclusion of each of these Alabama intercultural immersions, I am invariably struck by how far we as a society have come, *and how many "Divides" we've crossed*, and yet how many "Divides" are yet to be crossed. There is a real sense of hope — and a real sense of the presence of God in our small, diverse groups — as together we choose to be the *Beloved Community* with one another. We realize that it would not have been possible 50 years ago for 7-30 people of faith from diverse backgrounds to travel in relative peace and safety throughout Alabama. For me, these are real signs of the stones of hope that, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. intimated, can be hewn out of the mountains of despair among us, real signs that "Divides" among us can and must continue to be crossed.

Section Two— Theological Field Education Amidst Difference and Change

Perhaps, it is the fundamental role of theological field educators to help students to discern very clearly who and what they have said "yes" to. And so, we might begin a conversation

around the “who” and the “what” by considering a view of vocational formation and contextual education as means of integrating theological disciplines (systematics, the study of scripture, history, and ethics) with the more practical disciplines like spiritual formation, leadership development, church management/administration, and leadership in the preaching and teaching ministries of churches and other contexts. Vocational formation and contextual education imply a dialogical process that connects and engages the student, the seminary and ministry settings resulting in developed/well-formed spiritual leadership that is equipped to serve the churches and religious communities faithfully and effectively, and lead these various ministry contexts in the transformation of people, communities, and the world.

A Theoretical Framework for Discussing “Divide”

An overarching concern in addressing the matter of “Divides” regards what it means for faith communities to be relevant today. The reality is that America and the world are rapidly changing. No longer can we simply view ourselves in terms of black and white, Protestant and Catholic. Lewis Brown Griggs and Lente-Louise Louw, editors of the series of works “*Valuing Diversity: New Tools for a New Reality*”, suggest that differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, race, perspectives, personality, style, values, and feelings need to be honored and encouraged, not merely tolerated. The real value of diversity is that it produces synergistic interactions across “Divides”. It is this synergy that produces unpredictable consequences in terms of breakthrough and results (Griggs and Louw, 159).

To place the yearning for human connectedness into context, I believe that the African construct of Ubuntu is most helpful. Ubuntu simply means “the quality of being human.” It manifests itself through various human acts, clearly visible in

social, political, and economic situations as well as among family and forms of community.

According to sociolinguist Buntu Mfentana, Ubuntu “runs through the veins of Africans.” Lente-Louise Louw elaborates on it, and states that the quality of being human for Africans is embodied in the oft-repeated proverb, “A person is a person through other people.” A quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu emphasizes the criticality of Ubuntu, “You might have much of the world’s riches, and might have a portion of authority, but if you have no Ubuntu, you do not amount to much.”

Why is this important in the light of the practice of theology in the West? Research data shows that the United States continues to become more diverse or “different”. Our difference at home is seen in that

- Whites are the slowest growing segment of the U.S. population at .5%. Projections indicate that there will be a White minority in the U.S. by 2044.
- There are at least 3.3 million Muslims in the U.S., and that number is likely to double by 2050 (Pew Research Center).
- There are at least 55.3 million Hispanics in the U.S. (17.4% of the population), with a projected 120 million Hispanics in the U.S. by 2060.
- Asians make up 5.8% of the U.S. population, and make up 36% of immigrants, overtaking Hispanics. China is the fastest growing immigrant group in the U.S., passing Mexico.
- The 2nd fastest growing racial group in the U.S. is those claiming 2 or more races (bi-racial and multi-racial persons). This group has grown to at least 6.6 million people; 3.1% of the population.

- 41% of the world's migrants live in the West (*Christianity Today*).

The Church and the Racial Divide

As it regards the church and the problem of race in America (as one form of “Divide”), in many ways, a pall remains over much — if not most — of the contemporary church. *Race continues to be the elephant in America's living room*. In their book, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race*, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith developed a theory to explain why churches are racially exclusive enclaves despite Christian's ideals about being inclusive:

Americans choose where and with whom to worship; race is one of the most important grounds on which they choose; so the more choices they have, the more their religious institutions will be segregated (Emerson and Smith, 154f.).

Through sociological analysis, Emerson and Smith tested that theory and found it to be valid. Churches are more segregated than schools, workplaces, or neighborhoods. The least segregated sector of American society is also the least governed by choice; it's the military. Because white Protestants are the largest religious community in the U.S., they have the greatest choice as to with whom to gather. The authors point out that ninety-five percent of churches are effectively segregated, with 80 percent or more of their members being of the same race.

The result is that about 5 percent of religious congregations in the U.S. can fairly be considered multicultural/multiracial, with the majority of Christians engaging in what sociologists call homophily, or the desire to congregate with

“birds of the same feather,” with their congregations reflecting ethnoracial particularism (Emerson and Smith).

The Church and Leadership

To remain faithful to their calling, churches and theological schools have more than a need; there is an obligation (a divine calling, a mandate) to examine our approaches to leadership development and vocational formation. Within the context of consistently rapid change, the church, like most other institutions today, is crying out for effective leadership. The church is in need of women and men who have a vision for a better future and who possess the necessary skills to help move the church and society toward that future. Without transformational leadership, the church faces the prospects of losing its direction and failing to fulfill its mission.

The need for transformational leaders in the church is articulated by Dr. Lovett Weems in *Church Leadership*:

“Leadership is needed for Christian communities as for other human communities, but not necessarily leadership in a fixed hierarchical model. Churches are likely to grow toward partnership among their members when there is a dynamic leadership behavior among a variety of people and not just one leader” (Weems, 18).

Weems alludes to the leadership challenges confronting the contemporary church when he writes:

“...the church has yet to explore the implications of leadership for the life of the church and for the role of its ordained leaders. The church des-

perately needs new wisdom that draws upon the richness of Christian teaching and tradition, and, at the same time, mines the best of contemporary research on leadership” (Weems).

Vocational Formation

As it pertains to vocational formation and the role of the seminaries and theological schools in participating in the task of developing church and religious leaders, leadership encompasses the skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to move Christian communities forward in the fulfillment of vital mission and ministry for the transformation of communities and the world.

In participating in the process of developing transformational leaders, theological field educators should give attention to future leaders being prayerful and discerning, discreet and strategic in determining what will be needed to lead churches and other religious settings in moving people towards the specific vision — the preferred future — that God intends.

In essence, as theological field educators we play a critical role in helping future leaders see, articulate and realize *what it means to be pastoral theologians – persons who think theologically and act pastorally as they live out their calling in ministry and service to the church and world.*

A Template for Discernment, Exploration and Formation

The need for a clear sense of *imperative, imagination, innovation and integration* is apparent in examining the daily, multiple, and frequently overwhelming demands on ministry leadership within the context of a congregation or other ministry

setting today. In preparing for ministry, ministry interns should be afforded opportunities to explore their vocational identity in these four areas.

Imperative

Imperative speaks as to God's intent and purpose – God's calling — for the minister's life within the context of service with and for the church and world. Arriving at the imperative of ministry involves a careful process of discernment with the objective of arriving at clarity of calling. This speaks to the *divine and moral imperative – the calling* — that is placed upon persons seeking to engage in a life of Christian service.

Imagination

After careful discernment of calling and imperative in relation to the complexity of ministerial needs, the ministry intern in the ministry context might then engage in processes of imagination as to the specific nature of their ministry and the form(s) that ministry might take for the particular individual. With regard to imagination, Walter Brueggemann, in *The Prophetic Imagination* offers this perspective:

I understand imagination is no doubt a complex epistemological process, to be the capacity to entertain images of meaning and reality that are beyond the givens of observable experience. That is, imagination is the hosting of the “otherwise”... beyond the evident. Without that we have nothing to say. We must take risks and act daringly to push beyond what is known to that

which is hoped for and trusted, but not yet in hand. (Brueggemann, 80f)

As a part of the imagining process, students in partnership with the ministry setting and theological school might engage in exploring questions such as, “What specific shape is my ministry taking?” “What am I beginning to envision, see and imagine as to God’s preferred future for me in light of my gifts, graces and passions?”

Innovation

Innovation helps to draw upon the creative gifts that one has been given by God in the development of effective ministry. Innovation speaks to the freedom and creative capacity that persons possess. It involves the capacity to see old things in new ways, to forge and create something viable from that which doesn’t exist or has lost its vitality. Innovation is the power to think and create on terms that reinforce personal sanctity, identity, and value of all persons, and ultimately to facilitate the creation of new shapes and forms of community.

Here, questions that might be explored are, “What innovative and creative approaches might be undertaken to building effective ministry and achieving desired outcomes? And what gifts has God given (music, dance, poetry, literature, liturgy, prayer, technology, capacity-building, and consensus-building) that might make one effective in the ministry setting?”

Integration

Finally, the process of integration might be seen as the capstone of the vocational formation process and involves the melding together of the various components of the educational

experience — both in the classroom and the ministry setting. Integration involves aspects of the being, knowing and doing of the student with the objective of forming ministry competencies that is seen in highly effective religious leaders.

The principle of integration is related to the notion of synergy, and is the fruit of partnership and collegiality in the learning process, vocational formation and performance of ministry. The intention is to develop life-long patterns for leaders who are *well-developed, collegial and adaptive* within the contexts they may be called to serve.

The Seminary Panel

I conclude by sharing an account of a recent panel conversation of seminary students. This experience sheds light on matters that might be given attention in thinking on the future of vocational discernment and the formation for future religious leaders.

The first observation about this panel was the diversity of the group of seminarians. Five of the six panelists were in their 20s or early 30s. They had arrived at seminary from six different places — Chicago, New York City, the Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe, Mississippi and Virginia — none had come from the city where they were now attending seminary. They were United Methodist (4), AME (1), and Baptist (1). They were Korean, Latino, African, White and African-American. Four were women.

This diversity reflects that of this particular seminary at-large, and points to the fact that theological education today looks quite different than it did forty years ago, and that perhaps this type of broadening diversity is reflective of where the church of today may be moving, and what will be required of its future leaders.

As these students reflected on their seminary experiences and how they thought their theological education would impact their future role as religious leaders, it was clear that each of these six persons articulated a vision of the church and a vision of their role as a religious leader that would move the church beyond traditional notions of what the church has been, and is to be, institutionally. And thus theirs were visions that shifted conceptions of Christian ministry, and the ways in which church leadership might be practiced in the future.

The collective insights/observations of the seminarians pointed to prospects of the 21st century church living into new and exciting forms of diversity, and prospects of churches of the future being shaped in ways that give impetus to several foundational concerns. Succinctly stated, these concerns are that:

1. The church must be led towards deeper, more intentional exploration and growth in the practice of *spiritual disciplines* as means towards deepening faith and creating community.
2. The church must engage in processes that encourage the ongoing development of competencies in the *art of leadership* that is sensitive to cultural inclusion and the changes that are incumbent in new millennial reality.
3. The church must facilitate reflection/action relative to the burgeoning *globality* in our midst.
4. The church must facilitate an ongoing understanding and deeper engagement with *youth and young adult cultures*, which typically understand and appropriate the merging of cultures on levels that are more profound and pronounced than previous generations.

5. The church must facilitate constructive engagement and theological discourse across *cultures and theological/faith perspectives*.
6. The church must have the capacity to continue in organizing, developing and cultivating *strong partnerships and collaborations* (with students, local churches, judicatories, non-religious entities).

Conclusion

In summary, the development of competencies in these and other areas among future leaders could serve to help leaders effectively engage in their ongoing work of transforming churches and faith communities of the future, and play critical roles in helping people to cross the many “Divides” that will continue to present themselves.

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CHAPTER SIX

On the Practice of Preaching

David Moffett-Moore

Spiritual Formation is that process by which Christians grow in their Christian faith, by experience, understanding and service. Spiritual disciplines are those particular practices utilized to augment this spiritual growth. There are a variety of disciplines, many Biblical: prayer, scripture study, fasting, almsgiving, works of mercy, public worship, etc. Much has been written about these disciplines and this process. The purpose of this paper is to particularly look at the discipline of sermon preparation and preparation for preaching that every pastor is involved in on a continual basis, as a foundational tool in the pastor's spiritual formation. Much has been written about the mechanics of preaching and the theology of preaching; there are multitudes of collections of sermons. This is not any of these. This paper looks at the practice of sermon and preaching preparation as it impacts the pastor's personal spiritual life. The typical pastor spends more time in sermon preparation than any other single task. Preaching is the pastor's most visible and most evaluated task. The time spent preparing the sermon itself and

preparing to deliver the sermon must have a profound influence on the pastor's own personal spiritual formation during the pastor's career.

This paper was prepared in support of my study and research as part of the Academy of Parish Clergy's College of Fellows program. The Academy is an international and interfaith organization of congregational professionals and those allied in their support. It emphasizes collegiality, professionalism and personal growth. The College of Fellows is a self-governing adjunct of the Academy that recognizes excellence in the profession.

Shemekia Copeland, one of my favorite blues singers, has a lament, "It's Two A.M., do you know where your Baby is?" The "Pastor's Lament" might be similar, "It's Two A.M., do you know where your Sermon is?" As I have warned our Associate Pastor, we do not preach because the sermon is ready; we preach because it is Sunday: ready or not, here we come!

When we preach a sermon and the heavens are opened and the Spirit descends, we still have to do it again next week. When we preach a sermon that totally bombs and fizzles and is incomprehensible, we get to try again next week. After forty years of trial and error, I confess to still "practicing," still being on the way, without arriving. I've had plenty of well received sermons and too many that fell flat, yet they have each and all had an impact on me, on shaping my spirituality, forming my life in Christ, directing my path.

Jonathon Edwards spoke of Christians held by God, suspended above a fiery hell, as "sinners in the hands of an angry God." I have never felt God to be angry, always unbounded and unconditional love, yet Hebrews also warns us that "it is a dangerous thing to be in the hands of the living God," and God is certainly very much alive! Pastors are in those hands and know those hands and sometimes express those hands. It is an awful

and awesome, a terrible and terrific thing to find one's self in the hands of the Almighty Eternal One, the One from before the beginning to beyond the end, the One who is above and beneath, in and through all things, the One who is All in All, who is beyond our knowing or naming. If we are not the least bit nervous when preaching or preparing to preach, we do not understand the situation!

The practice of preaching is one that shapes the pastor's life, forms the pastor's spirit, fills the pastor's time and measures the pastor's ministry. The pastor may have many other qualities, skills and abilities in ministry, but he/she must be able to preach! The practice of preaching feeds into all the other expressions of ministry and directly influences the spiritual discipline and formation of the pastor. The practice of preaching is central to the role of pastor; it forms our ministry, shapes our life, and guides our devotion and spiritual formation.

For the first year when I entered the ministry, I had the same nightmare every Saturday night. I would see myself in the pulpit, preaching and leading worship, and discover that I was wearing no pants. In dream interpretation, this is a sign of shame, of personal embarrassment. I am a strong introvert; the idea of speaking in public was terrifying. Only after I began wearing a clergy robe did the nightmares cease. Only after I covered my personality with the marks of the office was I able to accept my presence in the pulpit.

Over the years I've developed a devotional routine for Sunday mornings, a pattern of prayer to help me prepare for the act of worship, breath prayers for divine guidance and blessing. As I put on the robe: "Less of me, more of Thee. Cover me in your cleanliness, robe me in your righteousness, hide me in your holiness. Not to us, O Lord, not ever to us, but to thy name be glory, to thy name be praise; for thy steadfast love is great toward us and thy constant faithfulness endures forever." For the

stole: "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden. I am gentle and humble and you will find peace for your soul, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." For the pectoral cross: "If you would come after me, first deny yourself, take up your cross, then follow me." With the wireless microphone: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to thee, O Lord, our light and our salvation. Not my words, but thine be heard; not our will, but thine be done. We live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

No one ever comes to church to hear what I have to say; they come to hear what God has to say! They do not come to talk about God but to experience the presence of God. As the psalmist confesses, "One thing have I asked of the Lord: this is what I seek. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek God's holy wisdom." No one is saved by Dave, not even Dave.

The preaching event is a living thing. The sermon is not a read essay, not a classroom lecture, theological treatise nor a soap box speech. It is a connecting link, an arena, for the dynamic process of divine communication between God and congregation. The preacher serves as prompter. Preaching the same sermon with the same text and the same notes with a different congregation is a different sermon. It is a living, dynamic, fluid process between the presence of God and the people of God, with the preacher serving as prompter.

The preacher may be a trumpet, through which God serenades the beloved congregation. Likewise, the preacher may be an ear trumpet through which the Holy Lover listens to the whispers of that beloved. In either case, the preacher is an instrument to be used for the benefit of others, never an object for special attention.

To attempt to preach is to stand with Elijah at the mouth of the cave, after the earthquake, wild fire and whirlwind, covering one's head and listening to the still small voice that is God. It is to stand with Moses before the burning bush or on the holy mount, receiving the Ten Words. Who are we that we attempt such a task? Who are we that we dare to speak for the Living God? Who are we to stand before God's holy people with our utterances? God help us, none can be worthy of such a calling!

Yet called we are. Plucked from amongst the people and placed in care over them, alongside them, yet never again one of them. I understand that individuals in some societies will not touch their holy persons, not only from a sense of deep reverence, but also because anyone who thinks God is speaking or acting through them, anyone who believes they are divinely inspired, must be crazy. And that craziness just might be contagious, so don't touch!

For more than the past year I have taken a number of preaching retreats or workshops. I participated in a preaching retreat led by Al Tizon on Missional Preaching, one by Frank Thomas on Prophetic Preaching, one by Jeff Porte of CenterPoint Church in Kalamazoo on the Mechanics of Preaching and two led by the faculty of Western Theological Seminary. I have read or re-read a number of books on preaching and on preachers. I have enjoyed several long, deep conversations with other pastors on the discipline and practice of preaching and sermon preparation. I've been ordained over 40 years; I am well familiar with the preaching task. Yet it is something that still fills me with awe, and sometimes terror. "Who am I to speak for the divine? Who am I to speak for God or to God's people? It is vital that preaching be vital: lively, engaging, fresh. We are preaching the ultimate Good News, with exclamation!

With Bill Tuck, we are *A Pastor Preaching*. With William Willimon, Lillian Daniel and Martin Copenhaver, we admit it is

an *Odd and Wondrous Calling*. With Mary Alice Mulligan, we are *Believing in Preaching*. With Karyn Wiseman, we *Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon*. With Barbara Brown Taylor, we cherish *The Preaching Life*. With John Morgan, we cherish being *Scholar, Priest and Pastor*. We are *Preaching the Luminous Word, From Memory to Hope, through Resistance to Change*, we seek to *Engage, Transform, Embrace, Transform* while *Nurturing Spiritual Depth*. If we are honest, we are weekly *Overcoming Sermon Block*. In addition to these and other books on preaching, I read several collections of sermons.

As part of the Fellows program of the Academy of Parish Clergy I have taken a guided study course on preaching. This has consisted of a series of preaching retreats, featuring outstanding preachers and several opportunities to share the craft of sermon preparation. I have completed four multi-day retreats sponsored by Western Theological Seminary of Holland, MI. I have interviewed fellow pastors for whose preaching and / or preparation I have respect. The Association of Chicago Theological Schools has a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching program that is quite well regarded, and I interviewed graduates of their program to glean what resources I could. I invited Rev. Steve Mullin, retired Presbyterian pastor, to review and evaluate my sermons over several weeks. I enjoyed several extended conversations with Rev. Jake Kaufman, who served as my mentor throughout the program. Rev. Dr. Bill Tuck, Dean of the College of Fellows and former seminary professor, proved to be very helpful and supportive through live conversation, internet correspondence and his several books on preaching. I spent time listening to recorded sermons of other actively engaged pastors. In my current setting, I am privileged to serve on a staff of three ordained clergy and a congregation that includes five ordained clergy; we have enjoyed several hours on the how's and why's of preaching.

The ancient Roman soldiers took an oath of allegiance, pledging their lives in defense and advancement of the empire. This oath was called the “sacramentum.” It is the word from which we derive sacrament, for Christian Baptism and Holy Communion; these are acts of God through the church. The oath and obligation of serving as pastor is of equal weight. Clergy pledge themselves to serve God in, with and through the church; it is a sacred obligation, and one that forms a special bond among those so pledged.

I value the camaraderie and collegiality I share with my fellow clergy. All who I approached were willing to share from their experiences, both trials and tribulations of sermon block and tips and tricks for overcoming it. I have particularly enjoyed the fellowship of the Academy of Parish Clergy the past decade I have been a member. There is a bond of shared ministry, of mutual support and encouragement and a common sense of call and challenge in parish ministry.

For most of my career I have followed the ecumenical lectionary. I find it freeing and forming. It frees me up from the responsibility to be myself; I can give myself to and lose myself in the text. It forms me because it forces me off my pastoral hobby horse, repeating my favorite texts or themes. Beginning with the lectionary allows me to build a worship service that is rooted and grounded in the scriptures, that allows the scripture to be the foundation and cornerstone for our worship. Hymns are selected and liturgy designed to flow from the lectionary readings, enabling the entire worship service to become an expression of the text.

For some congregants, their only experience of scripture is the Sunday worship service. We cannot expect that all our parishioners are familiar with stories in scripture, the layers of meaning, the inter-relatedness of the material. The sermon needs to offer some basic Biblical instruction. Every congregant

comes to worship with their own questions and concerns from the events of their lives and encounters of their week. How does the timeless message of the text relate to the pressing yet temporary issues of our daily lives, how does the wisdom of eternity offer insight or guidance for the living of these days?

I work on the sermon every day, studying commentaries, reading other sermons, scanning the internet, writing and reflecting on the text and where it might lead me. More breath prayers: “Thy word is a light upon my feet and a light upon my path.” “Lead me Lord, lead me in thy righteousness, make thy path plain before my face. For it is thou, Lord, thou Lord only, that causeth me to dwell in safety.”

I understand Jeremiah’s complaint, “If I say I will not mention God, I will not even speak God’s name, there is a fire burning inside of me, I am weary from holding it in and cannot.” (20:9) or again “Your word came to me as a joy and delight. I ate and it filled my heart.” (15:16) We are not pastors because we chose the path, it chose us. We are pastors because we are called. As Isaiah confessed, “Woe is me! I am lost! I am a person with unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet with my own eyes I have seen the Lord!” (6:5), or Job “Before, I had heard of you only by hearsay, but now with my own eyes I have seen you. I repent in dust and ashes.” (42:5-6). The practice of preaching, and preparing for preaching, is a practice of continual repentance.

In January, I announced to my congregation that I will retire at the end of 2017, after just over forty years of ordained ministry. Even at the end of my career, I want my preaching to be fresh. I want to say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” I want to confess with Luke, “when you have done all that is commanded of you, say ‘I am your unworthy servant; I have only done what was required of me.’” (Luke 17:10)

I was honored to be invited to begin the process to become of Fellow of the Academy. I have enjoyed the fellowship and dialogue along the way, perhaps as those disciples bound for Emmaus and waiting for the living Word to be opened for them. I appreciate the renewal afforded me by the programs I've undertaken. My efforts, in study and in service, proved to be acceptable; I was honored to bear the mark of Fellow and to be awarded that distinction.

My mother used to sit with me as I practiced at the piano, regaling me with stories of missionaries risking their lives for the sake of the Gospel. She wanted so much to be in ministry; we kids became her congregation. Years later, after I had settled in at my first call (and gotten over my nightmares), she came to listen to me preach on a Sunday morning. I came out of my study with my robes on, dressed ready and willing to become what I had been called to, to touch that living flame for a moment and risk being burned. She said, "You don't look like my little son!" I replied, "For the next hour, I am not your son. I am your pastor." We both teared up on that thought. It has been an incredible privilege, the journey of a lifetime, to be pastor and to preach, to even vainly attempt to speak God's words and think God's thoughts and to bare my soul, if not my legs, before the people of God in each Sunday's sermon.

Thanks be to God!

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CHAPTER SEVEN

What Do Other Christian Clergy Know about the Mormon Faith?

A Data-Base Study of Fact and Fiction

John H. Morgan

In a recent conversation this author had with a leading Vatican theologian, that Catholic priest stated matter-of-factly that “Mormons, of course, are not Christians!” The impetus for this study was precipitated by that conversation. When the priest was asked about the extent of his knowledge of what the Mormons actually teach and believe, he indicated that, though he himself had not read any Mormon theology nor had actually had conversation with any representative of the Mormon faith, he did contend that “everyone knows” what they believe and that certainly they are not Christians. However, I thought rather, as a research social scientist, that instead of allowing internet pundits and self-appointed Vatican spokespersons to decide for themselves who are and who are not Christians, it seemed only reasonable, fair, and “Christian” to permit religious communities to define for themselves their own understanding of the focal point of their faith experience (Blomberg & Robinson, 1997).

While Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and, yes, Mormons are often castigated for not being "Christian" as defined by those who feel entitled to hold ownership over that term, it seemed a rather fairer position to invite a spokesperson from their own religious tradition to say whether or not they are Christians using their own definition of the term (Millet and Johnson, 2007). The problem, of course, is a definitional one, namely, who is to decide what constitutes being a Christian? Is there just one acceptable definition? Are there levels of being a Christian? Can one faith community claim proprietorship over the definition of the term "Christian?" (Robinson, 1991). If anyone wishes to know what Mormons believe, I would have thought the honorable thing would be to ask a believing and practicing Mormon. Therefore, I set out to determine from other Christian clergy themselves the extent of their true and accurate knowledge of the Mormon faith. The research instrument was developed in consort with a leading Mormon scholar and the survey was administered to randomly selected clergy in the U.S.

This data-base study was designed merely and simply to determine the "knowledge base" of Christian clergy with respect to the faith practiced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is neither an attempt to convert nor to disparage but rather to determine the level of knowledge of clergy regarding this particular faith community. Too often, individuals (and clergy are not excluded from this generalization) feel that the information they hold about a particular faith community is correct by virtue simply of them holding it. When those opinions, however, are placed alongside the actual teachings of the faith community in question, too often the opinions (or shall we say prejudices) are found wanting in accuracy (Marty, 2007). To ask a Baptist if a Catholic is a Christian or if the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is biblical is quite different from asking

a Catholic! To find out what Mormons themselves profess in their faith, one is better advised to ask a believing and practicing Mormon than someone outside the faith or, indeed, someone who has left that faith (Shipps, 1985).. I have asked a leading Mormon theologian to correct and approve 25 statements about the Mormon faith to assure accuracy. Then, I asked 818 Christian clergy outside of the Mormon faith to indicate, in their opinion, which statements are false and, by implication, which are true. What follows are the data gathered and my analysis of their value.

A word about the information source is in order here for we are attempting to compare what Christian clergy think they know about the faith of the Mormon Church against what the Mormons themselves say they believe (McMurrin, 1965). The survey was based upon 25 simple statements and the respondent was asked to identify which, if any, were in his or her opinion false statements. Statements made in this questionnaire are based on the book, *The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity* (Salt Lake City, UT: Shadow Mountain, 2001), by Dr. Robert L. Millet of the Religious Studies Department of Brigham Young University. Furthermore, Dr. Millet edited and tweaked the statements to conform to correct Mormon teaching. By using this method, I am confident that the Mormon faith has been honored owing to the fact that Dr. Millet is an internationally respected authority on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being a theologian in that tradition himself while teaching at Brigham Young University.

The following survey was administered to 818 randomly selected Christian clergy, 50% Roman Catholic priests and 50% Protestant ministers. The directions were to simply identify the FALSE statements in the list of 25 statements. Each of these 25 statements was approved by Dr. Robert Millet of Brigham Young University in Utah as correctly representing the Mormon

faith. Of the 25 statements, there are SIX which are NOT TRUE, namely, 1, 4, 8, 11, 20, and 25. All others are true according to the teachings of the Mormon Church.

Note: The FALSE statements have been rendered TRUE in *italics*.

- 1) Mormons do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humankind.

(The statement is false.)

54% of the respondents believed it to be false.

46% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Mormons do believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humankind.

- 2) Members of Joseph Smith's family were originally Presbyterian.

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 3) Mormons believe that plural marriage was discontinued in 1890 for one reason — it was against the law.

(The statement is true.)

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 4) Joseph Smith held a traditional belief in the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible.

(The statement is false.)

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Joseph Smith did not hold a traditional belief in the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible.

- 5) Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible includes the books of the Apocrypha.

(The statement is true.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 6) Mormons worship God the Father, in the name of Christ the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. These three — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — constitute the Godhead.

(The statement is true.)

60% of the respondents believed it to be true.

40% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 7) Mormons believe that the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith.

(The statement is true.)

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 8) Mormons do not believe that Adam and Eve were real people, our first parents, and that they lived in the Garden of Eden.

(The statement is false.)

60% of the respondents believed it to be false.

40% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Mormons do believe that Adam and Eve were real people, our first parents, and that they lived in the Garden of Eden.

- 9) Mormons believe that humankind will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's.

(The statement is true.)

90% of the respondents believed it to be true.

10% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 10) Because Adam's transgression in Eden was forgiven by God, Mormons do not believe in "original sin."

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 11) Mormons do not believe in adult baptism by immersion.

(The statement is false.)

62% of the respondents believed it to be false.

38% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Mormons do believe in adult baptism by immersion.

- 12) Mormons believe that the Christian sacraments have been administered by Christian prophets since the beginning of time.

(The statement is true.)

56% of the respondents believed it to be true.

44% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 13) Mormons believe that Christ was with the Father from the beginning of time.

(The statement is true.)

68% of the respondents believed it to be true.

32% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 14) Mormons believe that the resurrection of Jesus was the first occurrence of a resurrection and stands as a physical proof of the divine Sonship of Jesus.

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 15) Mormons believe that man is the direct and lineal offspring of Deity.

(The statement is true.)

82% of the respondents believed it to be true.

18% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 16) Mormons believe that in this life or the life to come everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation and be saved.

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 17) Mormons believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in essence the atoning sacrifice of Christ. That powers of the Atonement are accessed through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion by one holding proper authority, the receipt of the Holy Spirit, and enduring faithfully to the end of life.

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

18) Mormons do not believe that the first sacrament is baptism by immersion.

(The statement is true.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

19) Mormons believe the second sacrament of the Church to be confirmation.

(The statement is true.)

58% of the respondents believed it to be true.

42% of the respondents believed it to be false.

20) Mormons do not believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

(The statement is false.)

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Mormons do believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

21) Mormons believe the priesthood is the power to act in the name of God.

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

22) Mormons believe that the mission of the Church is to invite everyone to come to Christ.

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 23) Mormons pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(The statement is true)

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 24) Mormons believe that the most universal form of revelation is the “Light of Christ” that dwells within every person born into the world as stated in the Gospel of John.

(The statement is true.)

74% of the respondents believed it to be true.

26% of the respondents believed it to be false.

- 25) Mormons do not believe that one must be born again in order to be saved.

(The statement is false.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be false.

56% of the respondents believed it to be true.

Mormons do believe that one must be born again in order to be saved.

As was noted earlier, 6 of the 25 questions were false and 19 were true. Of those that were false, four of the false questions were incorrectly answered TRUE at a rate of between 54% and 62% whereas the two remaining false questions were incorrectly answered TRUE at a rate of 36% to 44%. From a public relations point of view (if I may be so secular), the 9 questions that had the closest disparity of correct-to-incorrect answers should constitute the major concern. That is to say, where there are just a few percentage points of difference between the number of clergy answering correctly versus incorrectly, say 54% answer

true while 46% answer false, those are the categories of information which need to be more fully explicated in the profiling of Mormon beliefs. Those 9 questions of “close disparity” and the representative percentages of true and false answers are given here: #1 (54% true — 46% false), #4(56% true — 44% false), #5(44% true — 56% false), #6(60% true — 40% false), #8(60% true — 40% false), #12(56% true — 44% false), #18(44% true — 56% true), #19(58% true — 42% false), and #25(44% true — 56% false).

Of the “wide disparity” questions, there is less concern about misinformation among the clergy but in these “close disparity” questions, Mormons might wish to pay more attention to the education of the general public (DePillis, 1966). Regarding question #1 with the close disparity being only 54% to 46%, nearly half of the clergy are misinformed about Mormon belief regarding Jesus as both Son of God and Savior of the world (Buerger, 1983; Charles, 1993). Again, with question #4 with the close disparity being only 56% to 44%, clergy are confused about Joseph Smith’s beliefs regarding the Bible. In both of these cases, the Mormon community could easily and quickly correct this error on the part of clergy. Whereas question #5 regarding the books of the Apocrypha is less important, affecting only Catholic and not Protestant perceptions, question #6 with a close disparity of 60% to 40% should constitute a major initiative on the part of the Mormon community due to the fact that clergy have a misperception of the Church’s understanding of the Mormon position regarding the Trinity, i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, constituting the Godhead (Kirkland, 1984; 1986). Again, though the clergy are nearly half the time incorrect in what they believe about the Mormon faith as regards Adam and Eve and the sacraments of the Church, there might be more concern in questions #18 and #19 regarding the Mormon teaching about the first and second sacraments. Of really major

importance for public educational purposes is correcting the high percentage of clergy who do not believe that Mormons believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at an astounding rate of 64% indicating that they do not believe Mormons believe in the sacrament (Toscano, 1990). Finally, 56% of the clergy do not know that Mormons believe that an individual must be "born again in order to be saved" (Osler, 1991).

The benefit of such data-base studies as this rests with the relevance of real empirical information. One can surmise, speculate, and query regarding clergy knowledge of the Mormon faith or, as we have done, one can ask a number of clergy what they actually believe the Mormon faith teaches (Alexander, 1980). The difference is between opinion and fact! Then, once facts have been established, namely, a statistical assessment and understanding of the answers to the questions in hand, then and only then can a plan of action in response to the findings, to propose a method of proceeding in correcting misinformation, can actually be designed and implemented (Duffy, 2004). It is in this spirit that this study has been conducted and it is presumed that future such studies will extend our knowledge of what clergy actually know versus what they think they know.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Near Death Experience

Moving Toward Understanding and Acceptance

Lou Storey

A faith based understanding of an afterlife is supported in many religions, yet science has avoided or rejected the possibility for lack of empirical evidence. This essay explores that question in relation to new evidence based research involving the Near Death Experience (NDE); what it is and what it may mean for human consciousness and existence. The essay is divided into six sections, each of which investigates a different facet of this question, inclusive of: an examination of individual consciousness; scientific studies and testimonials of NDEs; the meaning of death and dying; human history and spiritual evolution; therapeutic intervention with a focus on Logotherapy; the role of values and personal faith; and end of life rituals, traditions and understandings. Recognizing linguistic limitations for language to inform in areas in which we may not yet have words, this essay also offers examples from literature and poetry, both of which by their nature stretch etymological boundaries in search of deeper meanings.

I. Adventure Inward: Perpetual Consciousness

Near Death Experience (NDE) can be understood as a first-hand account from someone who has experienced a brief period of bodily death and returned from that state having witnessed a number of vivid and compelling incidents (meeting deceased family members, traveling across extraordinary landscapes, having out of body experiences, among other occurrences). These NDEs suggest conscious existence beyond “living”, in other words, life after death. In his 2013 web-published discussion, *Consciousness and the near Death Experience*, Dr. Pim van Lommel, cardiologist, author and researcher in the field of near-death studies, makes the point that “before ‘67, we couldn’t do body resuscitation; we couldn’t do electrical defibrillation; you couldn’t do external chest massage”, consequently resuscitation was not a part of medical procedures. With the advent of these life-saving methodologies and new technologies, the number of individuals surviving periods of bodily death has escalated, as have the incidents of NDE’s.

Exploration of Human Consciousness—Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, author of *On Life after Death*, Dr. Ann V. Graber, author of *Preparing for Life’s Ultimate Journey: The Journey Home* and Dr. Pim van Lommel explore the phenomenon of NDE from a number of perspectives including medical and genetic studies, psychological investigations and personal experience. Each of the authors, in their exploration of NDEs, has established the importance of understanding the nature of human consciousness, and in particular the apparent ability to have awareness despite inactivity in the brain. The documentation of such events suggests that the brain alone is not the only source of consciousness or of our sense of existing. Supporting this supposition is the concept of the *dimensional human*, posited by Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist, philosopher and creator of logother-

apy. Frankl proposed that the human being is made up of three indivisible aspects: the soma, psyche and noös. Furthering this concept, Graber quotes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

We are not human beings
Having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings
Having a human experience (2004, p. 9).

Eternity as Possibility—Exploration of death, and our feelings, thoughts, fears and expectations of it, have long been a source for creative exploration and expression. Earliest human communications, on cave walls, etched into pottery, stone tablets and inked onto animal skins and papyrus, all attempted to somehow make solid sense out of the antithetically ephemeral nature of death.

In his book, *Toward the Future*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin observes, "The more the world is rationalized and mechanized, the more it needs 'poets' as the ferment within its personality as its preservative" (1973, p. 90). In her poem *When Death Comes*, the contemporary poet Mary Oliver exemplifies this ongoing human endeavor to transcend our fear and claim death in the same spirit that we claim life (excerpt):

When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

II. Preparing for the Journey Home: Standing in the Breath of God

Throughout history, we have wondered about our origin and our destiny. We have a deep innate yearning to belong, to feel connected to that mysterious source, to understanding our reason for being (Graber, 2009, p. 19).

Although NDEs have been an ongoing part of human history, it is only in very recent times, due in part to new medical and communication technologies, that the incidents of NDEs have increased. Consequently public exposure to personal narrative of out-of-body occurrences and knowledge regarding the possibility of consciousness beyond the physical body has expanded.

The 2002 British Broadcasting Company (BBC) Documentary, *The Day I Died*, explores science's foray into systematically and methodically explaining the experiences of out-of-body consciousness. The documentary interviewed a small group of physicians, medical professionals and scientists that had begun to seriously examine and record NDE related data in an effort to quantify and validate, as well as in some cases, debunk and explain away, theories and beliefs regarding out-of-body events. The documentary also offers the first-hand accounts from a selection of individuals who share their personal testimonials of awareness and extraordinary events experienced during documented periods of clinical death—a physical state that neuroscientists describe as a prolonged period where all body functions and brain activity have stopped.

Each of the individuals in BBC's *The Day I Died* documentary offer unique and compelling narratives:

- Heather Sloan returned from the experience no longer afraid of death, yet also renewed and refreshed in appreciation of her life.
- Vicki Noratuk, blind from birth, experienced for the first time what it means to see light—and, while in an out of body state, was able to look down at herself and exclaim “so this is what I look like, this is my body!”
- Gordon Allen, describing himself before the NDE as a ruthless businessman unhappy in life, returned from his experience with “a fire in my heart”, filled now with love and purposefulness and following a new career as a counselor, helping others—saying “if I had not had the near death experience I would not be interested in being here today”.
- Pam Reynolds had undergone an extensive brain operation that required that she be clinically dead with all body systems and metabolic functions being brought to a complete standstill for one full hour. During this time Pam was aware that she was in an unearthly realm and surrounded by warm and loving beings, she asked “Is God the light?” and was told, “The light is what happens when God breaths.” Filled with joy and a deep sense of love and compassion, she thought to herself, “I am standing in the breath of God!”

Since the late 1970s, the phenomenon of NDEs has been examined and studied in regard to the effect the experience has had on the individual having the NDE. In a study published in 1983, Bruce Greyson, M.D. found a marked increase in self-esteem, an increase in altruistic behaviors and a strong decrease

in suicidal ideation in those who had experienced an NDE. The study found clearly that those who professed to having had this brush with life after death had truly been transformed and revitalized for the better.

In support of the validity of NDEs, van Lommel compiled data quantifying the experience, inclusive of:

- Feelings of peace, joy, and cosmic unity
- sudden understanding
- experiencing unearthly realms of existence
- out of body travel
- vivid and heightened sensations
- unnatural brilliant light
- meaningful visions
- travel within a dark tunnel toward a distant and central light
- meetings with mystical beings and deceased loved ones.

No final conclusions have been drawn in the scientific community concerning NDEs, and a combination of indifference, skepticism and even hostility continues to be the predominant stance. In contrast to this view, Dr. Stuart Hameroff, Director of Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson, finds scientific plausibility in NDEs. In his article, *Consciousness in the Universe*, Hameroff posits that the “nature of consciousness, the mechanism by which it occurs in the brain, and its ultimate place in the universe are unknown...consciousness depends on biologically ‘orchestrated’ coherent quantum processes in collections of microtubules within brain neurons.

We conclude that consciousness plays an intrinsic role in the universe” (2003, abstract). In short, his research suggests that the human brain is not the origin of thought, but rather a *processor* of thought, responsive to vibrations that emanate throughout the universe, and that in fact *are* the universe.

III. **Journeying with Others: Crossing the Gateway Beyond Fear**

Death is like a storm. It is primitive, it is chaotic, it is a force of nature, and it wreaks havoc on our lives. But like the silence I found in the eye of the storm, it is possible to find peace in the chaos, in the suffering, and in the dark lonely night. It is possible to find peace in every death (Kessler, 1997, p. 162).

All life is hardwired to protect itself from injury or fatality; however the fear that humans have towards death goes well beyond the biological imperative to survive. From a medical perspective death is seen as a failure; from a cultural and collective perspective death is both a threat and a tragedy. Yet death is ultimately none of these things; it cannot be a medical failure as it is a biological imperative, nor can it be a threat, as it is in fact a promise and a guarantee. While death may initiate tragic suffering and the circumstances of death may be traumatic, death in itself is not a tragedy.

Frankl grouped *death*, along with *pain* and *guilt*, in his *Tragic Triad*, with the understanding that, as an integral and necessary part of life, death holds the potential for growth, transformation and great meaning. “Logotherapy, contrary to the general attitude of our culture, has given much attention to death. Facing the issue of death means becoming aware of our *transi-*

toriness. We are dealing with the question of how to handle our knowledge that we are mortal, living for a time on a given planet Earth” (Graber, 2004, p. 129). Death would not be feared if it were better understood and integrated into our understanding of existence. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross offers the simile that “death is simply a shedding of the physical body like the butterfly shedding its cocoon” (1991, p. 26).

Expanding Consciousness into Acceptance—In his book, *Man’s Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Frankl makes clear that “A sense of fulfillment is available to the man in the street, indeed, in the face of dying—and suffering” (2000, p.126). This sense of fulfillment may come when one allows for the existential reality of death and dying—by doing so one takes full responsible action for their life. In contrast to the misconception that death can render life meaningless, in fact, death is a prerequisite for life’s meaning. “Finality, temporality, is therefore not only an essential characteristic of human life, but also a real factor in the meaningfulness. The meaning of human existence is based upon its irreversible quality” (Frankl, 1959, p. 64).

Danish researcher and author Rene Jorgensen, founder of *NDE Light*, a non-profit organization with the mission to share information and research on NDEs, is part of a growing global movement to bring about greater awareness in this area. He himself experienced an out of body event while traveling in India. This was a life changing event in which he entered a different dimension of existence and underwent a life review, not just of his life, but of the full consequence of his actions on all of those around him. He emerged from that experience with a profound respect for all life, and a certainty that all life is connected within a universal pattern.

A reconceptualization of death becomes necessary if one is to transcend the fear of ending a life. Kübler-Ross shows us how attention to a dying patient can give us greater insights. For

both the person who is terminally ill, as well as their caretakers, facing death together can offer profound insights and spiritual, emotional and intellectual growth. Fully realizing and taking responsibility as one travels through each of the stages of grief outlined by Kübler-Ross (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) provides a firm foundation of meaning in which to push aside the fears that can paralyze and diminish our ability to fully comprehend and embrace all that the end of life offers. If we are to believe all that those who have had NDEs tell us, then we must accept that death is not an end to existence, but rather a transition. How we chose to live in our day to day life can reflect what our life is to be. As well, Kübler-Ross tells us:

One way to not be afraid is to know that death does not exist, that everything in this life has a positive purpose. Get rid of all your negativity and begin to view life as a challenge, a testing ground of your own inner resources and strength (1991, p. 34).

IV. **Help along the Mysterious Journey**

*Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
...The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That ache, age, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise”
To what we fear of death.*

William Shakespeare’s character Claudio in *Measure for Measure* (Act 3, Scene 1)

In Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Claudio's fearful lament of his eminent death, of going "we know not where", written and performed over four hundred years ago, speaks to the ongoing dread and trepidation humans have in relation to death, a fear based completely on the unknown. Yet, are we truly without clues that may allow us some forward motion in penetrating this mystery? Are we really without any evidence of being able to shed some light into the unknowing darkness of death? Certainly mankind has pondered similar questions since the dawning of human consciousness. This predilection toward questioning begins at an early age when the concept of death is first introduced.

Evidence of post-life consciousness continues to accumulate and build in our human history. The ever-growing archive of NDE may well be reaching a tipping point, as more and more cultures question, investigate and begin to embrace the reality of NDEs and what they foretell of life after death. "It is only in the last hundred years, perhaps, that fewer and fewer people truly know that life exists after the physical body dies. We are now in a new age, and hopefully we have made a transition from the age of science and technology and materialism to a new age of genuine and authentic spirituality" (Kubler-Ross, 1991, p. 39).

Our impending death is not the major obstacle to our becoming truly human. The obstacle is found in our running for cover on behalf of our escape from death. We sell ourselves short (McDermott, 1986).

As we move forward together in our shared human history the obstacles to our becoming truly human, as McDermott declares, are largely found in reactions to fear. To overcome this

obstacle we need to both find and nurture our courage to trust in our innate potential and our inherent tie to the noetic dimension.

V. **Journeying in Faith: Experiential Knowing**

The attitude of wonderment, of being in a state of deep inner silence, fosters receptivity for higher wisdom and inspiration (Graber, 2004, p. 54).

The possibility or impossibility of conscious existence after bodily death has been debated since antiquity. On this particular point, psychiatrist and philosopher Raymond Moody, M.D. PhD, began his 2012 talk, *Shared Death Experiences: An Analysis of the Characteristics and Implications* stating that the question of an afterlife is not yet a scientific question, as it is neither verifiable nor falsifiable. As an afterlife cannot, as yet, be proven or disproven, a “new species of logic is needed” beyond our current binary true/false model. Moody proposes that we must move beyond the limitation of binary thinking and into a consciousness capable of incorporating and processing *unintelligibility*, in other words, acceptance of what cannot be *concretely* understood. With this understanding we move toward the realm of *experiential knowing*—when inner conviction and noetic certainty guide what we comprehend to be true. This form of knowing is often connected to faith; however motivation for faith is complex and multi-faceted. When we align ourselves in acceptance of noetic guidance we open ourselves to a state of “spiritual awe” and an attitude of wonderment, as stated above. Pramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), Indian yogi and teacher of meditation and Kriya Yoga, was advised by his guru:

Exchange unprofitable speculation for actual
God-communication...Clear your mind of dog-

matic theological debris; let in the fresh, healing waters of direct perception (Graber, 2004, p. 54).

Yogananda's teacher sought to ensure that his student remain open to genuine experiential knowing, even if it did not align with standard practice or theocratic teachings. Similarly, Frankl tells us that we must be capable of seeing beyond cultural norms and values to the possibility of greater understandings, to reach for a kind of knowledge given to us noetically through our intuition. Remaining open to possibilities and open to paradox; seeing and rejecting the limitation of pre-conceived notions is the way in which we can allow the rational mind and abstract mind to function together. Being in a state of wonder is a kind of knowing that is shut down and lost when we prioritize a state of certainty and linear explanation (Graber, 2004).

The quest to make sense of such experiences in the light of medical and scientific advances draws together NDE returnees, religionists, and scientists to compose a new discourse on death and the afterlife. (Lee, 2013, p. 116).

VI. At Journey's End: Honoring Life, Embracing Rite of Passage

The greatness of a life can be measured by the greatness of a moment. (Frankl, 1986, p. 44)

Understanding death as transition is not new to human culture. "In most non-western societies death is not seen as a single event, but as a process; the deceased slowing being transferred from the land of the living to that of the dead" (O'Gorman,

1998, p. 1131). Much of what was instinctively known in earlier times is now being learned again and incorporated into modern practices of interpreting corporeality and its many meanings. Modern society has in many ways lost touch with rituals and traditions surrounding death that once afforded meaningful transition for both the memory of the deceased as well as for the survivors. At some point in our human history, “Fear supplanted hope, and the health and well-being of society was deleteriously influenced” (O’Gorman, 1998, p. 1127).

In many instances death has been *medicalized*, giving greater authority to medical professionals and thus diminishing and disempowering the role of family, community and the dying individual. In studies involving attitudes, emotions, traditions and theory surrounding death, an evolution of thought regarding death and dying has shown distinct phases over the last 500 years. This progression shows a shift from religions to secular language and considerations, with the occurrence of a “social death” in which terminal illness isolates and terminates the identity and sense of community-role for the sick individual prior to death. Atul Gawande, surgeon, author, and public health researcher states in his book *Being Mortal*:

The problem with medicine and the institutions it has spawned for the care of the sick and the old is not that they have had an incorrect view of what makes life significant. The problem is that they have had almost no view at all. Medicine’s focus is narrow. Medical professionals concentrate on repair of health, not sustenance of the soul. Yet—and this is the painful paradox, we have decided that they should be the ones who largely define how we live in our waning days (2014, p. 128).

Evidence of more holistic approaches and the understanding of death as “a rite of passage” are overtaking the medicalized view (O’Gorman, 1998). Budding recognition of spirit, a foundation of religious and spiritual practice, is now uncharacteristically becoming evident in the complementary fields of psychology, science and medicine.

Science, Spirit and the Afterlife Journey— *“It didn’t happen in my brain. It didn’t happen in the physical world.”* --this statement, by Dr. Eben Alexander, neurosurgeon and survivor of a nearly fatal case of bacterial meningitis that kept him comatose with no neocortex brain function, is in response to the vivid and complex memories he experienced prior to reviving from the week-long coma. In his video interview with Sheryl Worthington, Dr. Alexander accounts how his NDE was “transformational” and has confirmed for him that the human brain does not create consciousness. “Everything I ever thought I knew had to be reanalyzed.” Rather than shy away from the challenge of redefining his worldview and of upending his educational foundation, Dr. Alexander found the courage to become a champion of promoting awareness of NDEs and of advocating an expanded consciousness of what it means to be human. In his website, lifebeyonddeath.net, he states:

By probing deeply into our own consciousness, we transcend the limitations of the human brain, and of the physical-material realm. Together, science and spirituality will thrive in a symbiosis offering the most profound insight into fundamental Truth, yielding unimaginable power. The keystone is in global progression of individual conscious awakening.

Conclusion: Global Awakening and Practice Advocacy

The legacy of Viktor Frankl's advocacy for global consciousness-raising lives on in his teachings. By design logotherapy is complementary to other forms of therapy, and is "not meant to substitute for psychotherapy but, rather to supplement it" (Frankl, 2000, p. 79) and thus can conform to the Zeitgeist to ensure ongoing relevance and comprehension. Logotherapy in application can reshape crisis into spiritual rebirth. In his day, Frankl's brave and controversial therapeutic model ushered in a new era in its recognition of the soul as a dimension of human reality. Neither entirely secular nor religious, yet responsive to both, his philosophy now gives mankind a tool with which to move away from its fixed position within the darkness of a swirling void of ego-centered existential vacuum into a way of liberation of "being" and cognitive/intuitive illumination honoring the full potential of our soma, psyche and noös. Awareness and acceptance of NDEs may well be the shadow cast that foretells of coming events, as public consciousness regarding our spiritual nature and of existence outside of our corporeal state become a reality.

Benedict Groeschel, in his book *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development*, states that spirituality can be understood to present itself in four ways, or, the "four voices of God". He says "Western philosophy suggests that human beings know and seek God as *the One, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful*. If you analyze yourself or those you know well in terms of the spiritual life, you will notice that most people fit rather well into one or perhaps two categories" (1983, p. 6).

Frankl understood that *all existence has meaning*, thus nothing can be lost in death. He explains that "no great idea can vanish, even if it never reaches public circulation, even if it has been 'taken to the grave'...the drama and tragedy of a man's

inner life never have unfolded in vain, even when played out in secret, unrecorded, uncelebrated by any novelist...Every one of us knows somehow that the content of his life is somewhere preserved and saved” (1986, p. 33).

The role of spiritual advocate is inherent to any who practice self-transcendence, either as profession or as personal avocation. Clinical therapists, counselors, ministers, and those who find ways in which to live by the pull of what moves their spirit are acting as advocates of spiritual evolution. That ministry requires trust, compassion, respect and love.

Death is but a transition from this life to another existence where there is no more pain and anguish. All the bitterness and disagreements will vanish, and the only thing that lives forever is LOVE (Kubler-Ross, 1991, p. 84).

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CHAPTER NINE

What is the State of the Medical Profession Today?

*A Reflection on Physician Responsibility and
Accountability in the Face of a Rapidly Changing
Healthcare Landscape*

Michael Teiger

Introduction

What is the state of the medical profession today? This is a broad question indeed. Are physicians more or less pessimistic about the state of medicine and the healthcare system in which they work? Are they working more or fewer hours? Are they seeing more or fewer patients? Are they independent practice owners or employees? Are they at capacity, or do they have time to see more patients and assume more duties? Do they plan to retire, work part-time, seek hospital employment, continue as they are, or pursue some other option? Do they continue to accept Medicare and Medicaid as a form of payment? What grade do they give to the Affordable Care Act? What effect has implementation of electronic medical records had on their

practices? How many of them are part of an Accountable Care Organization? Do they believe there are enough physicians or do they believe more should be trained? What recommendations and insights would they share with policy makers and the public about today's medical practice environment and the healthcare system? And how do current physician attitudes and practice patterns affect what is most important to patients, i.e., easy and timely access to care?

To mention the obvious, given the number of questions listed above, multiple important issues abound when anyone attempts to give meaning and insight into the present state of health care delivery in the United States. The answers to these questions are frequently complicated and multi-factorial, and carefully collected and current data are needed in order to formulate meaningful responses. Much has changed and in fact, has changed very rapidly over the past 3 — 4 decades. A physician who practiced only a generation ago would hardly recognize the present landscape. Not only is excellence in the science of health care delivery under careful scrutiny, but also the business model of care delivery is also under scrutiny to determine if the best care is delivered at the least expensive cost and after the least amount of time is spent delivering that care. Office visits are measured in minutes spent and hospital stays are measured in terms of throughput (the amount of material or items passing through a system) where the “items” discussed in hospital administration board rooms are ... patients!

The Physicians Foundation ¹ is a national, not-for-profit grant making organization dedicated to advancing the work of practicing physicians and to improving the quality of healthcare for all Americans. Their mission is to answer these and many other questions. In the two years since The Foundation completed its Survey of America's Physicians from 2014 ², the healthcare system in the United States has seen more changes than in any

comparable two-year period on record. The study, conducted by Merritt Hawkins & Associates, reviewed data responses from 17,326 physicians. Following are just a few identified changes:

- The enrollment of eight million new people in insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
- The enrollment of an additional five million Americans in Medicaid.
- An unprecedented number of hospital and medical group consolidations.
- The explosive proliferation of urgent care centers, retail clinics, and other outpatient facilities.
- The release of billing data by Medicare on thousands of physicians.
- The continued rapid adoption of electronic medical records (EMR).
- The implementation of quality based tracking and reimbursement systems.
- The continued expansion of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs).
- A growing physician shortage, dramatically highlighted this year by long lines at Veterans Administration facilities.

The changes are profound and large scale, affecting both physician practice behavior as well as healthcare business models. Physicians must accommodate the flood of patients as well as adjust to business models that feature large integrated health systems rather than small private practices. Physicians

must adapt to payment systems that have been turned upside down in which value of services is rewarded instead of volume. Physicians must implement electronic medical records ³ and a wide array of other medical and practice management technologies required by health reform. And physicians still must maintain the highest standards of care as they manage over 1.3 billion patient encounters per year. ⁴

The key findings of the survey that evaluated over 20,000 physicians from all 50 states and from multiple medical specialties were as follows:⁵

- 80% of physicians describe themselves as either overextended or at full capacity (up from 75% in 2012 and 76% in 2008. Only 19% say they have time for more patients.)
- 45% of physicians plan to take one or more steps that would reduce patient access to their services (such as cutting back on patients seen, retiring, working part-time, closing their practice to new patients, or seeking a non-clinical job), leading to the potential loss of tens of thousands of full-time-equivalents (FTEs)
- 70% of physicians believe there is a physician shortage, that more physicians should be trained, and the cap on funding for physician graduate medical education be lifted.
- Only 35% of physicians describe themselves as independent practice owners (down from 49% in 2012 and 62% in 2008.)
- 53% of physicians describe themselves as hospital or medical group employees (up from 44% in 2012 and 38% in 2008.)

- Only 17% of physicians indicate they are in solo practice (down from 25% in 2012.)
- 30% of physicians would not choose medicine if they had their careers to do over (a decrease from 35% in 2012.)
- 45% of physicians describe their morale and their feelings about the current state of the medical profession as positive (an increase from 32% in 2012.)
- 50% of physicians would recommend medicine as a career to their children or other young people (an increase from 42% in 2012 and 40% in 2008.)
- 70% of physicians believe that their clinical autonomy is sometimes or often limited and their decisions compromised.

One of the biggest changes in the survey's respondents was in the category of practice status. In 2012, 48.5% of respondents identified themselves as practice owners or partners. In 2008, 62% did so. By contrast, in 2014, only about 35% said that they are practice owners or partners. Practice patterns are changing rapidly and it is clear that the employed model is making large and swift inroads into private practice. In their *Physicians Alignment Survey 2012*, Accenture, a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, reports that this is particularly apparent among newly hired physicians.⁶

I think that the one thing most reflective on the present changes in healthcare attitudes was the profession's attitudes to their jobs, especially as it pertained to their perceived responsibility to the profession and to their patients as well as to their own personal sense of job satisfaction. Most telling of all with regard to new physician attitudes to their profession was the

responses to the question that follows — What factors do physicians find most satisfying and most fulfilling about medical practice? To this question came the following responses:

- Patient relationships 78.6%
- Intellectual stimulation 65.3%
- Interaction with colleagues 22.0%
- Financial rewards 15.2%
- Prestige of medicine 12.2%

Physician Responsibility and Accountability in the Face of a Changing Health Care Landscape

While all of the above important issues in the changing health care landscape are important and each is worthy of several pages further of careful discussion, the subjects of responsibility and accountability are singularly relevant issues for the medical practitioner in these changing times. Just as they are important issues in any profession, i.e. the legal profession, in ministry, in engineering to name a few, the focus on physician responsibility and accountability brings to the surface the very nature of the ethical practice guidelines upon which health care is practiced. It speaks to the strength and the foundation of the relationship between physician and patient, the relationship between colleague and colleague and the larger relationship between the health care establishment and the society it serves, in general.

These are important issues to discuss, perhaps in a broader context, but my comments will be limited to my own field of healthcare practice and my own experience as an individual practitioner. In all of our work places, no matter what the endeavor, any professional takes responsibility for the work

effort he or she does and in some way or another, we are all accountable for the job well done as well as responsible for the job poorly executed. We serve the patient, the family, the institution with whom we affiliate and the greater society. We as practitioners are responsible to them all, and as a result, will be carefully scrutinized and held accountable for the work we do.

Physician Responsibility

Who is it to whom are we, as practicing and treating physicians, actually responsible? The answer was not as simple as it seems. The immediate answer, of course, first and foremost, is that we are responsible to our patient. When the patient seeks our help, we enter into an unwritten therapeutic contract, one that is fully binding and stands up in a court of law. It states the following:

*A patient-physician relationship is generally formed when a physician affirmatively acts in a patient's case by examining, diagnosing, treating, or agreeing to do so. Once the physician consensually enters into a relationship with a patient in any of these ways, a legal contract is formed, either written but more usually, tacitly assumed, in which the physician owes a duty to that patient to continue to treat, and if not, to properly terminate the relationship.*⁷

We are responsible, as best as we can, to heal and prevent suffering. In fact, when we graduate from medical school, we pledged, with modern day modifications, the Hippocratic Oath, and did so with honest sincerity. That is our mission. (Parenthetically, ministers and attorneys and engineers alike, as

well as other professionals, all declare similar oaths when beginning to formally offer their services to the public. An attorney's oath is legally binding and enforceable. Similar with engineers. Yet from a legal point of view, in most cases, there is usually no formal, legally binding contractual relationship that ministers have with their parishioners (of course, ministers answer to a higher power, indeed).

But in addition to the responsibility we, as physicians, have to our patient, we also have responsibilities to the patient's family members who want to know everything possible, including answers to questions that only God could possibly answer. And friends, if we are permitted to breach the world of HIPAA confidentiality, will demand information in like order. We are responsible to any student, be it medical student, intern, resident, Physician Assistant or any other member of the care team who needs to learn at the favor of the patient's assent. We frequently are responsible to the nursing staff and discharge planners who carry with them their own personal beliefs of how patients should be treated, especially when it comes to end of life issues, institution of hospice measures, drug or alcohol abusers, etc. When ethics or religious beliefs enter into the care decision arena, the answers are less about science and more about personal opinion. Yet it is the physician who, in the end, writes the orders and takes final responsibility. It is the nature of the job description — the buck stops there.

But also, responsibility extends further away from the patient and more toward the entity who actually pays for the medical care, the payor. A complete discussion of that realm would require a lengthy thesis rather than this short manuscript, but suffice it to say that a physician's responsibility is also directed to the accountable care organizations that make decisions on what test can be done and what treatment will be paid for. Not only the insurer is interested, but the hospitals are

remarkably aggressive about getting patients out of the hospitals quicker and quicker in order to cost contain, and it is the physician who is scrutinized in very fine detail, to keep his “numbers” low, in order to erase from their censuses any needless days spent by patients in the hospital under their watch.

Patients, loved ones, institutions and payors — all require attention and a doctor’s best effort to maintain the quality of medical care at its highest level. But where the physician actually directs his greatest responsibility is to society in general. Because it is the will and the directive of society that has bestowed upon the physician the privilege of caring for the sick. It is a responsibility that usually is never taken for granted (although at times, it might slip toward the back of the doctor’s minds as they carry out day to day activities). But upon reflection, each physician knows that he answers to many profoundly important voices. And most physicians try to respond appropriately.

There is, perhaps, one further realm of responsibility to which the physician must draw his attention and that is the responsibility to him or herself. All physicians carry with them strong personal feelings with regards to ethics and they have their own personal or religious beliefs of right and wrong. Violating those beliefs in the name of proper medical practice or standard of care may not be acceptable at any level. Issues such as abortion, end of life decisions, pulling the plug or withholding care such as feeding for the terminally ill or giving or withholding medications for comfort are as much ethical and religious decisions as they are medical ones. At the end of the day, the physician must be comfortable with the decisions he or she makes, and has the right to refuse to make those decisions or carry out those treatments that violate his or her personal beliefs.

So, the trick is to navigate between the voices that call the doctor to his profession and the voices that call him to act as

an ethical human being, one who has his own personal needs and passions, as well as other equally important outside responsibilities to his family, and his friends, and if he is a believer, his God.

Physician Accountability

To the Profession:

In order to address the question of physician accountability, it is important to note that this issue of accountability to the profession has changed much over the years, as has so much else. But accountability to the profession is still what I would call intensive and comes after many years of formal education in the field of medicine. For the practitioner, accountability is structured and defined and can be delineated without too much difficulty to any outsider. There are rules that have been set, both at the national and at the state level, as well as through medical political societies and sub-specialty societies.

In America, nationally standardized tests are required to be taken and passed before licensing can occur. These tests, given in three parts, are called National Boards, and for a medical practitioner to be Board Certified to practice medicine, an important accountability standard, these tests, must be passed. An additional test in the sub-specialty desired must also be passed in order to prove competency and to be declared Board Certified in a particular sub-specialty. This national standardization of accountability is designed to offer the highest quality of care to the American public. Those who practice certainly hope that it does.

Next and foremost in importance, medical practice is a licensed vocation and licensing in any state requires careful accountability, controlled by each state, before medical practice can be undertaken. For the American trained practitioner who has followed normal educational pathways, the rules and

requirements are straight forward. To the foreign trained, the route is not quite so simple. States require proof of training, proof of continuing education, in some states, proof of no criminal record (I have licenses in seven American states and have been finger printed in five of them), and proof of reasonable good health with no history of drug or alcohol addiction. The licensing process requires the swearing that one has good moral and ethical character and has not been accused, or sanctioned or arrested or convicted or deported. The “vetting” process by each state’s licensing board is both strict and impressive not to mention time consuming.

But to practice in a hospital in a community, and almost no physician practices without hospital privileges, aside from the state’s licensing process, the same procedure is independently validated by the hospital, in order for the practitioner to obtain hospital privileges to work in that hospital and do patient care. Further, if the physician wishes to practice surgery, he needs to also be on probationary status while he is supervised by another physician who is already on staff at that hospital.

Therefore, in order to practice, an individual physician must be deeply accountable to the state he wishes to practice in, and to the hospital with whom he wishes to be affiliated.

There are medical societies that exist to which a physician belongs which now mostly enhance his or her medical credentials. But far from wielding any power these days the way they did in the past, organizations like the AMA or specialty societies like the American College of Physicians or the American Thoracic Society or the American College of Cardiology have both lost much of the regulatory control they carried in the past and are facing steadily decreasing membership. Their lobbying power to effect change in healthcare has waned considerably.

To the Public:

For the individual practitioner, however, accountability to the public is a much more important issue. And the question of accountability here could be answered on several different levels.

From an ethical point of view, the physician answers to his or her patients. They are clearly directly accountable to them. It is their job and their vocation to respond to their needs. The patient comes with a need or a concern and by legal contract, the physician is obligated to respond as best as they can. They can decide from the start if they do not want to enter into any arrangement and refuse to treat. That is each physician's right. But if they do accept the responsibility to treat and to serve, then they are ethically and legally accountable to that individual to do the best that they possibly can. And that is an important distinction. In medical care, physicians are obligated to train and continuously learn the newest and the latest in treatments – as well as learn the best in diagnostic techniques. That is their professional responsibility. But with that knowledge, they are now accountable to that patient to do the best that they can, with the tools accumulated through training and thus, endeavor to maintain, to heal, to help and to comfort. If they can, then all the good. They have fulfilled their contract with the patient and both parties, the patient and the practitioner, have succeeded in their goals.

Most physicians strive to do the best that any similarly trained physician in the community could do. The standards are frequently self-imposed and are also noticeably interesting. Physicians are accountable to do *not* the very best that *the best* physician in the world could do, but instead, they are held to the standard of accountable for what is considered the “standard of care” for that particular region and that particular specialty. And standards do vary from region to region, depending on resources, available talent, cost, etc.

In fact, in the malpractice arena, this is how standards are fixed and adjudicated in court. Thus, the next level of accountability facing physicians, then, is in the legal arena of malpractice. This is the most severe of levels of accountability that exists to which the practitioner has to answer. In the legal arena, a physician would be held accountable and at fault if he or she either neglected to treat, or did treat, but not at the level of sophistication that is considered standard for the community in which they practice.

In medical care, physicians are required by the nature of the legal contract that defines the doctor — patient relationship to be accountable for the work that they do. This is the formal nature of the job. But even if the legal issues didn't exist, as is quite true in so many other less litigious countries, physicians would still be bound by the moral and ethical responsibility to care for the sick and the poor and thus, the accountability takes on not a legal umbrella, but an umbrella of ethical responsibility for the care and welfare of our fellow man. Getting paid for what they do does not diminish the importance of the need to be accountable, because it is also, simply, the moral thing to do.

Like the minister who hears his call from God, physicians have heard a similar call from the more secular society that has given this mandate, to practice their craft and be responsible and be accountable to those they serve and who have come to their doors to help. I think that few would argue that the jobs, that of medical care and of ministry, are, in many many ways, extraordinarily quite similar.

Final Thoughts

It should be clear that any comments attempting to highlight and address all the issues raised in this paper will only scratch the surface at best. So much in the profession has changed

in such a short time that the reasons for all the changes are far from clear. It is fascinating to note how the field of ministry has changed similarly in many respects, and also has found a need to confront many of the same issues as do physicians, such as job satisfaction, issues of class and privilege, educational requirements, or lack thereof, professional responsibility and all this in the face of an ever dwindling parishioner base. The dynamics of sociology as well as economics are forcing rapid change for us both and more changes are yet to come. For me, the issues have never been categorized as either good or bad, but have always remained just . . . “different”. Perhaps just a sign of the changing times. For me personally, moving toward the later years of my career, my job satisfaction has been high, my place in the world has been comfortable and my financial compensation has been adequate. Few professions carry with it such similar career benefits that last.

I would argue, also, that ,with some reflection, and after listening carefully to my clergy colleagues, the field of ministry in most respects, holds similar elements of job satisfaction, albeit in different ways. While the financial remuneration might not be similar, the minister’s relationships with his parishioners, the intellectual stimulation of biblical study, the satisfaction from offering comfort and solace when it is needed the most and the sense of joy for proclaiming the word of God, all must offer, at the deepest level, the same sense of purpose and satisfaction and idealism that physicians also feel, and that brought the clergy to their calling in the first place.

If reflection and pondering and study do anything at all, they raise all of our levels of consciousness to the conclusion that all professions have intrinsic to their daily work both problems and issues and things worthy of complaint and in need of improvement. But moving past the bad, which, by human nature we always seems to focus on the most, there is usually more

good that can be discerned than bad. Professional responsibility and accountability are not an onerous burden or a professional penalty, but rather a necessary and even helpful institution that bring with it a continued need for maintaining practice excellence as well as proper oversight and protection for all. Focusing in the good is always a matter of personal perspective and in the end, we probably all should be thankful. There are many, many worse professions to which we could have been called. And thankfully... weren't.

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CHAPTER TEN

Process Theology, Aesthetics, *Halacha* and Spiritual Development Through Art

Elyssa Wortzman

“And above all, remember that the meaning of life is to live your life as if it were a work of art.”

— Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1972

Over the last three decades, Jewish American communities have moved away from traditional collective worship and practice towards the individual journey. Today’s religious seeker makes her own path, alone or with small, increasingly diverse groups, seeking meaning and personal ritual. The landscape of contemporary spirituality is constantly changing as well, as Gen X’s reintroduce the mystical and magical and Gen Y’s integrate media, “with its emphasis on the visual, the interactive” (Brill, 2007, p.10). Alan Brill (2007) writes that in order to “capture this audience, clergy are most successful when they create support groups, *tehillim* groups, *havuras* and *hevrutas*, healing circles, retreats, artist workshops, and discussions of meaning and purpose in life (emphasis added)” (p.10). Moreover, with greater

diversity in Jewish background, culture and practice with inter-marriage and secularization, space must be made to acknowledge and accept individualized spiritual identity as part of a collective spiritual journey. Like multiple intelligences (Brill, 2007, p.11), we must recognize that there are multiple modes of spirituality. The process of Mindful, Art-based Jewish Spiritual Direction (MABJSD) provides a multiple-modality methodology with an authentic basis in Jewish sources for individual or group artistic commitment in which one can find oneself and the other (often without the barriers presented by traditional liturgy and ritual). It is also a powerful manifestation of process theology offering a new way in which to know God. It can renew spiritual community and provide a Jewish alternative to (or alongside) *halachic* obligation, particularly for those increasingly disaffiliated and unobservant American Jews.

Spirituality Through Art

For many years I have had an intuitive understanding of the nexus between the artistic process and relational consciousness. Art has always been for me a way to connect to my inner self, to express myself while connecting to others, and to enter into the timeless flow of the Creative Source. This flow state of art making has the power to renew, refresh, re-orient and reintegrate. During training as a Jewish Spiritual Director, I was given scope to explore the use of visual imagery. I also began reading the work of expressive arts therapists Shaun McNiff and Pat B. Allen, whose journeys resonated so deeply with my own, sometimes unarticulated, experience. Experimenting with their methods, what evolved was an application of their processes to my own journey in Jewish spiritual direction. I began using this method as a Spiritual Director with groups of adults, and later pre-adolescents and adolescents.

Art making, inherently mindful (Rappaport, 2014, 32), becomes sacred when the process involves intention, image making and witnessing. One immerses in the “flow” as one steps outside of linear time and experiences a sense of oneness (Rappaport 2014, 32): a state which Csikszentmihaly argued supports spiritual growth (as cited in Kaplan, 2000, p.71). Guiding another into the flow, what in Judaism we call *shefa*, is central to the process of Spiritual Direction. Dov Baer describes the process as one of God moving through us (as cited by Kushner, 1987, p.71). According to the mystical treatise, the Zohar, *shefa* is a river of Divine creativity that runs through all of life and every particle of the universe at all times (Zohar: 2:290b).

For Allen (2005), art making is a genetic impulse (p.31) propelling us beneath the surface to hear the ‘voice of the soul’. Her spiritual art-making process travels the path of self-awareness and self-knowledge (Allen, 1995), expanding relational consciousness while revealing and externalizing our beliefs so we can begin to transform (Allen, 1995, p.3). It develops a “relationship with the Creative Source, the internal guide from which inner wisdom comes” (Allen, 1995, p.3) and it creates community and relationship with others through sharing the image. Unlike many types of meditation, her process is action-oriented, which she argues is better suited to Western culture (Allen “Intention” 60).

McNiff (2004) explores the role of the image in the process of knowing. He is interested not in what the image says about a person, but in what the image says *to* a person (p.21). Metaphorically, McNiff (2004) sees the image is an angel/messenger. By calling the images “angels”, says McNiff, we shift from rational to imaginal thought, liberating the image’s creative potential (2004, p.100). McNiff (2004) uses a process of ‘imaginal dialogue’ influenced by the work of Rudolph Arnhem, “

James Hillman's post-Jungian archetypal psychology, Buddhist thinking and phenomenology" and "Heidegger's notion that the 'thing things'" (p.71). One looks at (witnesses) the image with an open mind and heart, waiting to experience its influence (McNiff, 2004, pp.78-9).

While scholarship on the use of art in spiritual direction is limited, Christine Valters Paintner and Betsey Beckman have recently published an inspiring book that begins to explore this connection. Their process includes the three stages of intention, art making and witnessing so that the ancient language of art becomes a 'dialogue with the Divine', a connection to the collective consciousness and our inner self, that can lead to *d'vekut*, a Jewish concept of coming close to God (Paintner and Beckman, 2012, pp.4-5).

Mindful Art-Based Jewish Spiritual Direction

MABJSD is an adaptation of the art-based therapies of McNiff and Allen, the wisdom of Reb Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro (the *Esh Kodesh*), and the Jewish contemplative tradition to spiritual direction that becomes the framework within which the search for meaning is explored. Although overlapping with other mindful systems, including Paintner and Beckman's process, MABJSD was developed without the influence of these sources. MABJSD is a ritual process of *opening, setting boundaries, intention, art making and witnessing* (a detailed study of MABJSD with youth is found in my unpublished dissertation).

Opening. To begin, one must open the heart and prepare to receive (inspiration, wisdom, etc.) through silent/guided meditation. This stills the body and mind so that the heart can begin to listen to its inner voice.

Text Study. Text study on a particular theme creates boundaries that further the sense of safety. Art making is less

based on the text or theme as it is inspired by what the text brings up in the participant.

Kavvana. Entering into the flow requires “a process that is goal directed” (Kaplan, 2000 p.72), in this case a written intention statement. *Kavvana* is a Jewish technique of consciousness-raising (Blumenthal, 1997, p.563) that includes focusing attention and directing the heart (Green, 2012, p.137). It requires a listening in to discern the heart’s desire.

Art Making. In silence, one selects art materials and creates art that may be directly or indirectly related to the intention and/or text. Creative expression through art making allows one’s heart to cry out, to express its emotional state and/or perceived challenge or conflict. In most cases, participants are given simple art materials to choose from. The emphasis is on the *process*, not the *product*. Since “art directs the heart” (Coleman, 1996, p.111), it is an ideal modality for aligning the mind and body with the heart’s direction, an essential element for transformational *kavvana*.

Next, one must establish a relationship with the images enabling “them to act as ‘agencies’ of transformation rather than simply as ‘illustrations’ of the psyches of their makers” (McNiff, 2004, p.85). The subjective nature of color and its emotional evocativeness provide the widest spectrum of emotional responses (Albers, as cited by McNiff, 2004, p.128). The message is also transmitted through the particular expressive qualities of the materials and medium (McNiff, 2004, p.138).

The *Esh Kodesh* argues that images have a grounding effect and can be used as one of the first steps in breaking down the blocks to spiritual awareness (Shapira, 1996, pp. 21-2). God is not manifest in the material, rather it is human beings who require “a material image to help us reach outward ideas that are lofty and transcendent” (Shapira, 1996, p.24). The soul has an “image-forming function” *that has greater power than the word*

to reveal its depths (Shapira, p.31-3). Visualizing the image arouses the soul “so that the disciple will know more than s/he would otherwise know. Through the mind’s observation and particularly through the form and its vividness enables you to merge with the holiness that is being envisioned. And as a result, holiness, Torah and its altered experiences from the upper realm will be attracted to the person” (Shapira, p.31-3). I argue that externalizing the imagery in MABJSD is an extension of the techniques employed by the *Esh Kodesh*.

Witnessing. When the art making process is complete, one engages in a Modified *Shiviti* Practice. *Shiviti* are meditative plaques traditionally used in some Jewish communities to “deepen insight” (Davis, 1999, p.227) and are usually inscribed with Psalm 16:8, *Shiviti Adonai l’negdi tamid* – “I will keep God before me always”. In the Modified *Shiviti* Practice, one sits as witness contemplating the image. After several minutes, one begins writing down one’s interaction with the image, preferably in dialogical format. Contemplation of the image can be seen as a process of relational consciousness as one connects with the image and its divine message: with heightened awareness the ‘self’ expands as one merges with the object observed (McNiff, 2004, p.57).

Convening individually or in a group with a spiritual director, participants share their work, allowing others, without judgment, to witness their revelation. The session ends with a closing ritual, in which one may offer a blessing that reinforces the witnessed experience. Together these elements of the MABJSD process integrate the advice of the *Esh Kodesh* (1991): “Listen and you will hear how far your gaze reaches” (p.22).

Witnessing as a process of validation, manifestation and relation is central to Judaism. In the daily, central prayer of the *Shema*, the last letter of the first word, *ayin*, and the last letter of last word, *dalet*, appear bolded and enlarged in Torah. They spell

ad or “witness”. Our sages understand its significance explaining, “by reciting the *Shema*, we become witnesses to God’s existence” (Feld, 2010, p.77). In spiritual direction, listening (the *shemia* of *shema*) is the doorway to hearing our inner voice and “a path to intimacy with another person and with God” (Paintner and Beckman, 2012, p.50). I argue that in this process of group sharing each student becomes a witness to the divine in the other. The witnessing process, without judgment or commentary, validates the students’ individual experiences and is a source for moral reflection and character building (Brill, 2007, p.13). This is a process of “inner hospitality” akin to Abraham and Sarah’s welcoming of the strangers, “a welcoming in of all parts of ourselves,” even the dark sides, “as holding wisdom for our own growth and wholeness” (Paintner and Beckman, 2012, p.21).

Process Theology

Process theology is a dynamic, relational approach to God, recognizing that the cosmos, and everything in it is constantly shifting, moving and becoming (Artson, 2013, p.8). In process theology, God itself is in continuous evolution. The idea that every aspect of reality is in the process of becoming is already embedded in Jewish daily liturgy: “God renews each day in goodness” or “the One who renews creation constantly”.

Created in the image of God, we are co-creators in this renewal process (McNiff, 2004, p.86) bearing “the responsibility of sanctifying the mundane” (Magid, 2015, p.208). “There is no doubt,” says Shawn Zevit, “that creating is a key to our search for Godliness”, in which “we learn to participate in the perpetual revival of creation...”. Jung also sees access to the imaginal realm as an inherent human capacity that, according

to Allen, is a “manifestation of *b'tzelem Elohim*” (Allen “The Presence”).

Artson (2013) describes process theology in a way that supports using the process of art making as a way to know God:

The world, then, is partially self-created and self-creating. The cosmos is a partner with God in its own becoming. We are partners with the cosmos and with God in our own becoming. ... In every moment we are coming into being again and again. Think again about the level of electrons, protons, and neurons at which you are flashing into being, flashing out of being instantly, and over and over again. And, at each moment you are meeting the sum total of the choices you made with the choices you now face. And you get to decide where you are going to go with that opportunity. That moment of becoming – the present – is called “concrecence,” in which everything comes into being. And after you make the choice, the selected option becomes part of God’s consequent nature. God hold out a choice to you that you are free to take or free to reject – and then God meets you in the next choice, with the next possibility (pp.9-10).

This approach to God, which I argue is suited to today’s fast-changing and individualistic environment, empowers the individual to use free will to become a co-creator of herself, her mood, her relationships and her life story.

Process theologians and the multitude of spirituality experts, following Nye’s definition of spirituality, share a common understanding of spirituality as relational consciousness.

And aesthetics (Singleton, Mason and Webber), art expression and spiritual development all share this common ground (McMurtary 85, McMurtary 84 qtd. Nye). With a Creator and a created that are constantly evolving comes a spiritual process *of knowing and unknowing*. For the great Jewish master and founder of Hasidism, the Ba'al Shem Tov, "the ultimate goal of knowing is *unknowing*" (Ba'al Shem Tov 3:7-8). Art making as a spiritual path necessitates acceptance of the unknown, while cultivating a process of inquiry that not only brings answers but raises further questions (Allen 2005, p.42). Just as the ineffable divine name means "I am that which is becoming," so too we exist in a state of "evolutionary becoming" (Teilhard de Chardin, as cited by King, 2013, p.9).

Hence, I argue that a spiritual practice of art making is a manifestation of process theology that uses shape, color and form to reveal God both as the process of creation as well as within the process of creation (Keller, 2008). Art puts us in touch with infinite potential (Allen, 2005, p.35). We follow the flow of divine energy as we "step in, become immersed, lose ourselves and emerge enlarged" (Allen, 2005, p.8). The images we receive offer new ways "of participating in life, of being" (Allen, 2005, p.7). Perhaps Moses and God co-creating the second set of tablets (Exodus 32:16) is the penultimate example (the first set having been inscribed solely by God's finger).

If process theology brings us a new and dynamic way of understanding God, aesthetics and spirituality bring us a new way of understanding *halacha* (Jewish law and religious obligations), a traditional Jewish avenue for connection to the Divine. Govinda (1976) writes (about Buddhism) that a living tradition "finds its natural expression in art" (p.153). Judaism is also a living tradition: a central concept in the tradition of mystical Judaism is the 'tree of life', *etz hayyim*, which symbolizes both Toraitic, esoteric knowledge and "the entirety of God and

Jewry's ongoing revelation" (Artson, 2013, p.31). Process theology as manifesting in MABJSD allows Judaism to blossom into its full potential as a tree of life.

In Magid's progressive writings on a new Judaism for today's post-modern seekers, he calls for a 'reformulation of Judaism' based on a concept of the One, "whether this be God, the Collective Unconscious, or some other image" and relational consciousness. Looking to Martin Buber, Magid (2015) writes "the devotional act of worship must take place through the relational act. Not relation to the self, but relation as an act by which we can make the finite other into an Absolute Other" (pp.207-8).

Reinventing Jewish prayer and other rituals through art and aesthetics can infuse new life into traditions that do not speak to the many unaffiliated and disidentifying contemporary American Jews and "SNBRs" and deepen the experiences of those already invested in Jewish life. "In our time," says Glazer (2011), "unless the ongoing revelation of religion is mediated through aesthetics, it is doomed to stagnate amidst the irrelevance of its creation" (p.188). He argues that *halacha* can be reimagined, as it is not necessarily the will of God but an expression of the human desire to hear that still small voice (Glazer, 2011, p.117). Just as art has the power to reveal what is concealed, so too one of the ultimate purposes of spirituality and religion is to engage in this sacred act of revelation.

The future of Jewish observance, according to Glazer (2011), requires a reinterpretation of the system of *mitzvot*, which is obligated by *halacha*, with Adorno's concept of artistic commitment as interpreted by Glazer: Instead of being obligated to do this or be that, one has the ability to exercise one's free will to make a commitment to a way of life. Glazer relies in part on Magid's (2015) progressive view of Jewish law in post-American culture: "The transformation of *halachah* from mere technology to art is accomplished when our concrete acts are

seen as an ongoing spiritual practice rather than simple obedience” (Magid, 2015, p.205). Using spiritual art making as a form of ritual prayer and dialogue with the Divine, makes the creative process a spiritual practice and an antidote to rote recital of liturgy.

Magid points us towards understanding how spiritual art-making through the MABJSD process can be a pious Jewish spiritual practice: If the creative power within each of us is understood as a spark of the Creative Source, or a re-immersion in the flow of the process of creation, then this very process can give form to our *experience* of the Divine. Spiritual art making brings the practitioner into direct awareness of process theology and provides the opportunity to actively and intentionally engage in the evolutionary process of being.

Magid argues that meditation can renew our spiritual experience of *mitzvoth* (Magid, 2015, p.208). Aesthetic expression and contemplation is a form of meditation (Shapira, McNiff, etc.). Davis (1999) writes that: “Meditation does not necessarily mean sitting still. It can also be done through emotions, thinking, learning, contemplating and through art, music or song. (emphasis added)” (pp.227-8).

In Jewish meditation, the goal is not to achieve a state of complete emptiness, but to know God through a spiritual practice (Magid, 2015). “Just as artists submit to the creative power within themselves, truly pious persons submit to ritual because it gives form to the Divine in her own being. Painters, dancers, or musicians submit to two mutually inclusive models of obedience. First, they submit to some *internal* mechanism that enables inspiration to assume form. Second, they submit to an *external* medium that determines what that form will take. The contemplative must submit to the inner nature of their creative instinct, guided by a submission to the “still small voice” of the Divine. Creativity begins with listening” (Magid, 2015, p.204).

Further to Magid then, MABJSD combines both meditation and the contemplative practice of art-making to create a pious Jewish spiritual practice.

Applying process theology's concept of evolving creation to Jewish religious practice supports forward thinking approaches like Glazer's and Magid's for the renewal of the *halachic* system. Commitment rather than obligation, inspired by the artistic process and Adorno's approach to creating music, provides the opening for reimagining prayer and *avodah* (devotional service) in a way that empowers the individual and the community to 'take hold of Torah' and find meaningful personal and collective identity. MABJSD then is an "artist-ized" (Magid, 2015, p.204) devotional technology that responds to Magid and Glazer's call for the integration of contemplative practice into Jewish ritual life in a way that "reformulate[s] and breathe[s] new life into the ritualistic life" of contemporary Judaism (Magid, 2015, p.203).

Spiritual development does not result from intellectual education about religious life or dogma, but "from *increasingly meaningful and organized experiential* connections of the self," (emphasis added) to the presence of something larger than ourselves (Boyzatis 153) whether by ritual or practice (Boyzatis 153 qtd. Johnson and Boyzatis).

The *Esh Kodesh* (although maintaining *halacha*) understood spiritual education in the same way as Magid, Glazer, Boyzatis and relational consciousness proponents are nudging us to: His "great gift to Jewish pedagogy is the insight that we need to be in an *emotional and personal relationship with Torah* in order to learn it properly. *Religious instruction has nothing to do with commanding* and pretending. It is about *looking inward* and identifying and expanding, the streams of holiness within each of us (emphasis added)" (Cohen-Keiner, 1996, p.xvi).

Using the *Esh Kodesh*'s internalized view of religious education with a wider understanding of Torah — beyond the 5 books of Moses to the Rabbinic notion of 'the laws of life' — we see that Jewish religious experience can exist outside of, or alongside of the *halachic* system of *mitzvot* in a process of spiritual development whereby self-awareness and insight reveal the Torah within. This is the essence of spiritual art-making within the context of Jewish spiritual direction.

Conclusion

Creativity and imagination, manifested in the process of art making, are clearly important tools for spiritual growth. Adapting the processes of Allen and McNiff to a Jewish context, and using the approach of Jewish spiritual masters like the *Esh Kodesh*, I developed the MABJSD process of opening the heart and preparing to receive through meditation; brief text study and discussion; forming *kavvana* through writing intention statements; making art; reflecting and witnessing through individual Modified *Shiviti* Practice and journaling; and group sharing.

Using art making as a spiritual modality gives people an authentic understanding of God as "Intimate Creator" (Shapira, 1991, p.79) and the opportunity to witness the holy in all of creation (Shapira, 1991, p.82). By entering the ongoing process of Creation, and becoming aware of our role as co-creators ourselves, one automatically enters into an intimate communication with the divine and the studio becomes a *temenos* or sacred space of creative transformation (McNiff, 2004, p.18).

Art as a spiritual practice embodies the principles of interconnection and evolution proposed by process theology, so that God is found both in and through the creative process. If all people are born with an innate spiritual sense then spirituality need not be contained within individual religious belief

or dogma. Artistic commitment through MABJSD provides a system outside the structure of commandments (*mitzvot*) — a meta-spirituality — that allows each person to begin identifying her own spiritual path and speaks to today’s seekers’ desire to exercise willful commitment. It is a way for one to bring Jewish mindfulness practice into our lives so that one is able, like Jacob, to recognize that “God was in this place and I did not know it.”

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